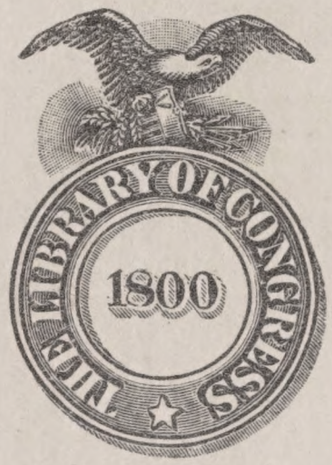
A Wee Lassie



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LINWOOD HALL.

A WEE LASSIE;

OR,

A Unique Republic.

BY

MRS. MAY ANDERSON HAWKINS,

Author of "Only a Scotch Laddie," "The Claymore Estate," "A Face and a Life," "Philip Barton's Secret," "Jack Payton and His Friends," and Other Stories.

35

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TO

Miss Julia S. Tutwiler,

OF LIVINGSTON, ALABAMA,

AND

Mrs. General Johnson,

OF BIRMINGHAM, ALABAMA,

TO WHOM THE STATE OF ALABAMA OWES A LASTING DEBT OF GRATITUDE BECAUSE OF THEIR UNTIRING DEVOTION TO THE CAUSE OF THE UNFORTUNATE AND DEPENDENT CLASSES AMONG HER CITIZENS,

THIS VOLUME

IS RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED BY

THE AUTHOR.

PREFACE.

VERY many of the incidents in this book are real facts; and many of the characters are drawn from real life.

Nancy Weldon depicts a woman whom the author has known a number of years, whose original and unique mode of expressing herself has been a delight to many others besides the writer.

Agnes Hudson and her parents, as well as Mabel Hildegarde, have their counterparts in lives also well known, while the debased character and wonderful conversion of "Old Blue" are living facts. The picture of the convict camp is true to life, although inadequately painted, as the author has toned down some of the facts as being too harrowing to place before the readers of this volume.

It is true that few among us realize how "the other half live," and fewer still who seem to care. If this simple book can be used of God to deepen the interest of some of his children in the neglected boys in our midst, as well as to paint the need of more efficient Christian work among the convicts, those moral lepers banished outside the social camp, the writer will feel amply repaid for her labor.

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A WEE LASSIE.

CHAPTER I.

At Linwood.

GLENN HILDEGARDE smiled into his sister's face as he said: "Your heart is truer than your head. The mist of skepticism which dims your mental vision does not reach below the intellect. Your heart accepts the truth as spontaneously as does mine."

Glenn was twenty-nine and Mabel nineteen. They were orphans, and the sister, who had resided as a student in a northern college for the past four years, had been at Linwood only a few days.

Glenn was a bachelor, and Linwood was a magnificent estate lying among the hills of northern Alabama.

He had but recently become possessed of this property through the death of an uncle, who, being a widower and childless, had bequeathed all his wealth to this favorite nephew.

The brother and sister were alone in the world, and Glenn's present thought was how best to help this fair sister, whose home was now beneath his roof, out of the mists of skepticism which had gathered about her during her college life.

"If I could see one single death, such as we read about, where the soul recognizes the holy presence of spiritual beings, as it passes from our ken, the faith of my childhood might be restored," Mabel said, in response to her brother's words.

"Like Thomas, your faith must rest on sight before you will believe; and this is not faith at all."

As he spoke Glenn looked earnestly into his sister's troubled eyes, and a half sigh escaped him.

"Mamma was a Christian, yet she died without giving us any token whatever to assure us that her faith was not in vain."

"But she was in a stupor, dear, for hours before she passed away. Her last conscious words were an exhortation for us to meet her in heaven. This did not look as though her faith grew dim as she neared the parting of the ways."

Mabel made no response, and Glenn continued: "The Word of God alone should be

sufficient for your faith to rest upon. How did you ever drift from the simple belief of your girlhood? How well I remember your joy when you first met the Crucified One. His love was real to you then; why cannot you trust him now?"

"Oh! I would give everything I possess if I could believe now as I did then," the girl answered. Then she added: "I think it was seeing the hollowness of those about me who professed to be Christians, after mamma died and I left home, that first unsettled me; and the churches where I attended seemed so like the world; no one was ever saved there, as they used to be at home, so that I began, after awhile, to think the whole thing was a big sham; and now—well—now—I do not know where I stand. Spiritual things have grown unreal to me, and when I try to read my Bible something in my heart seems to whisper, 'It's all a lie; have a good time while you can. Eat and drink, dress and dance, for to-morrow you die.'"

"Poor little girlie! The old serpent is making a huge bid for your soul, and no mistake; but the Captain of our salvation is too strong for him. Trusting in him, I can shout the victory, even now, while you are still in the woods," and

as he spoke Glenn waved his hand above his head and cried, in a jubilant voice, "Victory! victory! victory! in the name of Christ our King."

A relieved laugh broke from his sister's lips.

"I feel lots better," she said, and then turned to look about her. Woman-like, she wondered if any one had heard Glenn's words. They were standing in a rustic pavillion on the Linwood grounds, and the open highway was not far distant. A solitary horseman was just passing. "Suppose," she murmured, "yonder rider heard your shout. How strange he would think it!"

"Would he? Well, he is welcome to think what he chooses. Let me tell you one thing, Mabel, that may help you in the days to come. I don't believe in covering up my religion. It's the biggest thing I have got, and I can't smother it, or smooth it down. When the Holy Ghost got hold of me, he didn't mince matters one bit. He just went to the bottom of my heart; turned it inside out, and showed exactly how black and filthy it was, until I felt in my deepest soul that hell was too good for me. And then, when I was ready to despair, our holy Christ came. He blotted out my black sin; breathed his love through my polluted soul until I thought heaven had opened for me. I have been praising him ever since."

It was good to look into Glenn Hildegarde's eyes as he thus spoke.

Mabel looked, listened, opened her lips twice to speak before she said: "I just begin, I think, to understand you. I felt you were changed, but I did not know why. I thought our four years' separation had wrought it. Now I see the truth."

Glenn laughed. "Yes, I'm a different fellow from the one you kissed good-bye when you entered college. I was a rebel then; now I am a loyal soldier under the banner of our glorious King, and all I seem to care for is to know and execute his orders. I'm but a slow, stupid fellow in learning his will; but he is so patient that I never grow discouraged. Do you know," and he ran his eyes over the beautiful grounds, handsome buildings and broad acres of his estate, and slowly repeated: "Do you know, I am wondering and asking him every day why he gave me this magnificent property, and what he expects me to do with it."

His sister looked the surprise she felt.

"Why, he expects you to enjoy it, of course."

"Of course. But I want to enjoy it in the way that will best please him."

"And that will be — ?" Mabel paused, doubtfully.

"In brightening as many sad lives as possible, and introducing as many poor fellows to my Captain as will meet him. I used to think, when I was abroad, that I would come home and settle down to literature, and make myself a name. Now I seem only to care about extending the knowledge of his name, wherever I go, for it is about the only one in the universe that is worth knowing. Dante, Goethe, Plato, Homer, Shakespeare, and all the others that I used to rave over, seem to me, now, as nothing."

"And yet a knowledge of them, and of their works, is certainly essential to a polite education," Mabel objected, as she turned impatiently toward the house. Then she added, with a backward glance: "I am half afraid, from your words, that you have 'gone cranky,' as the girls say in college, on religion. I hope not, for I have counted on having a cheery comrade at Linwood, and not a moping, sky-gazing *religieux.*"

Such a ringing laugh greeted these words that she smiled in spite of her momentary vexation. Glenn came up beside her, and his happy eyes scanned her face indulgently, as he said: "Forgive me for talking to you so freely before we have had time to get acquainted. Your presence here is such a delight to me that I have allowed

"If only she could have been spared to us."

(Page 15.)

my heart to run away with my head. Do not feel nervous over my religion. It is exactly the kind our mother had, and you know what a wise, cheery, sympathetic comrade she always was to us. It was her religion, as I now see it, that made of her the woman she was, sound, sweet, and wholesome to the core."

"If only she could have been spared to us," Mabel responded with misty eyes, "what a different girl I might have been."

"Our Father knew best, dear; and do not forget that it is the sapling that stands apart from its fellows, in the middle of the open meadow, that grows into the strong, wide-spreading tree. Look," and Glenn pointed to a thrifty hickory that stood in a sunny, unsheltered space to the right of them; "there is an illustration of my thought. See how that tree is branching out and spreading itself, and giving promise of becoming a splended specimen of its kind. Compare it with this one, here in the grove, surrounded by other trees, and note the difference."

Mabel examined the two hickories with lively interest, and after a moment said: "I see. One is slim, and tall, and fragile-looking, and I can readily believe that a heavy wind might blow it

over or snap it off, unless the other trees should break the force of the tempest."

She paused, and Glenn smiled as he said: "Exactly; and the other looks as if the same wind would only retire, baffled, from an attack made with the intention of overthrowing it. Its roots reach out in all directions, and it is so perfectly formed, has developed so symmetrically, that it offers the best possible resistance to the storm. This is because all of its fellows were removed when it was but a sapling, and it has gradually become innured to the storms, nature throwing her safeguards around it, as needed, in the form of wide-reaching roots, a sturdy trunk, and evenly apportioned branches."

It was with thoughtful eyes, but smiling lips, that Mabel turned and remarked, after a brief interval of silence: "Thank you for your lesson. It has helped me."

She slipped her slender fingers into his strong clasp, and hand in hand, like two children, they strolled toward the house.

CHAPTER II.

An Old Friend.

THE days and weeks flitted by until ten months had passed since Mabel Hildegarde became a resident of Linwood.

These had proven the happiest hours she had known since childhood. The fond affection she had always borne her brother had now ripened into an intense devotion, mingled with admiration, which left Glenn little to desire in the way of human love and companionship.

Friends came and went at will, and while the brother and sister enjoyed their visits, their deepest happiness was found when alone together. Each was an interesting study to the other, for they were very unlike in person as well as character, Mabel being like her mother, while Glenn was a typical Hildegarde.

One morning at the early breakfast—for Glenn never wasted the precious morning hours in bed—he laid an open letter beside his sister's plate.

"Read it," he said, "and then tell me if you are pleased."

She at once began its perusal, and as she ended the last of the closely written pages, she lifted a face on which a smile and a frown fought for possession.

"The letter is charming. Mr. Keith must be all that you have described him. But two whole weeks is a long time to give to his entertainment."

Glenn laughed. "When once you know Keith you will think differently. He and I were together for three years, day and night, and his presence was never once an interruption, not even to my thoughts. He is a rare combination."

"I dislike paragons," Mabel responded, a quick throb of jealousy stabbing her heart. "But, of course," she added, hastily, "I am very glad, for your sake, he is coming."

Two evenings later the expected guest arrived. As Mabel scanned his rather tall, slender figure, and marked the deep thoughtfulness of his eyes, she was guilty of a grimace behind her fan. Glenn was of magnificent proportions, like his estate, and his happy eyes, beaming face, and buoyant manner had become his sister's ideal of manly perfection.

Before dinner ended, however, she found their guest possessed a quiet power of engaging and holding her attention that quite surprised her.

So marked was this that, when the meal was over and the three were alone in the drawing-room, a feeling that she had long known and liked Kelso Keith began to steal over her.

This strange and unwelcome thought irritated her, and she was contemplating an early escape to the piazza, when her brother laid his hand on their guest's shoulder, saying: "How is it I see you wearing such a striking pin? I thought you cast all such vain adornments aside that winter we were in Rome?"

His friend smiled into Glenn's face, and Mabel noted a joyousness in his eyes which had not before been visible.

"This pin has a story connected with it. It has only adorned my person for the past several hours. A young man on the train, just as I reached your station, placed it where you now see it. Had it not attracted your attention tonight, you might have missed the story, as I shall never again wear it. Notice the design."

Glenn studied it for a moment before he spoke.

"A unique one, truly. What is the thought?"

"The pin is made from the fangs of a rattlesnake. The design is intended to convey the thought that the wearer has chosen the arch-

fiend, under the guise of a serpent, as his boon companion; and that no more evil or danger will result from such association than is found in these empty and harmless fangs."

Mabel gave a slight shiver, noticing which their guest remarked: "A gruesome thought, indeed, and a fatal one, if acted upon. I am sure the young man now understands this."

"Sit down, Keith, and tell us the whole story," and Glenn wheeled an easy chair in front of his sister's, for his friend, and himself took a seat by her side.

"There is not much to tell. The coach from Nashville was crowded, so I shared my seat with a young fellow whose manly face and bearing at once engaged my interest. I found, on entering into conversation with him, that he was leading a reckless, dare-devil sort of life, summed up, as he was pleased to tell me, in the idea he had taken pains to have crystallized in this pin.

"I found he had drifted into his reckless belief and life more because of his surroundings than from any especially evil bias in his nature. Fatherless from infancy, and with a mother who is a leader in fashionable society in one of our Northern cities, the young fellow has never known a real home. He told me one of his

earliest remembrances was his mother having taught him to drink toasts with becoming grace at private banquets, and then recite witty epigrams to please her guests."

"Poor little chap. Not much hope for his future with such a mother as that," Glenn remarked, as his friend paused. "But go on; I am deeply interested, and am wondering how the young fellow came to give you his pin."

"There is little more to tell. Our Father filled me with such a burning desire to help the youth that, before I knew it, he was quite melted under the story of divine love. I doubt if he ever before had had a real heart-to-heart talk with any one who had really met Jesus Christ as a personal Saviour and Friend. Before I left him he solemnly promised to change his course of life. He also engaged to read a chapter daily from a New Testament I gave him. I offered him a package of seven very precious and spiritual letters, which I always carry with me, in printed form, written by a personal friend of mine. He accepted them with seeming gladness, and promised to read them carefully, and then, if he felt he could keep the promise that goes with it, he would send for one of these pins."

As he spoke Keith drew a tiny box from his

vest pocket, and opening it, disclosed several dainty pins made from polished silver, lying in its depths.

"And what are these?" Glenn inquired, curiously examining the one his friend reached him. Before he could reply Mabel exclaimed: "I know. Several of the girls in college wore them. It's the pin the Christian Endeavorers wear. Nettie Kingston, who was my room-mate, was very enthusiastic over hers. Said it and the pledge she had taken when she joined the society helped her lead a Christian life as nothing else ever before had done. She tried to get me to subscribe to the pledge and send for one of the pins. I declined, but she induced many of the other girls to do so."

Keith smiled into the earnest eyes upraised to his, and gently inquired: "And why did you not?"

Mabel's brow clouded as she answered: "I was sure it would not help me; I needed something more practical and farther-reaching than pins or an empty pledge could be."

"Yet, that these are often used of God to reach the deepest depths of hungry human nature, there can be no doubt," was the quiet response. "My friend on the train, Wallace Dupont by name, is, I doubt not, reading one of

those Christian Endeavor letters to-night. And I have faith to believe that this fact, and the desire the reading of it will arouse in his breast to have the loving Christ it tells about as his personal Friend and Saviour, will, under the power of God's Spirit, be the means of his salvation. He has already solemnly renounced his former carefully marked out belief, and as evidence of this fact he fastened this pin on my coat just as I left the cars."

"And do you carry these pins and packages of letters about with you wherever you go?" Glenn inquired, with an earnest glance into his friend's eyes.

"I do," was the answer. "The Bible says we are to sow beside all waters, not knowing which will prosper, this or that."

"I see. A pocket Testament, a package of letters, a Christian Endeavor pin and a pledge are your equipments for the King's service. Not a half-bad idea," was Glenn's rejoinder.

"It takes more than you have mentioned to make the equipment complete and effective," Mabel remarked, thoughtfully. "I might have all these, yet I am sure I should accomplish nothing."

"Yes, I see your thought. A heart full of love and burning zeal for souls is an indispensa-

ble qualification," her brother rejoined, with a quick glance into her clouded face.

"And how is one who is tempted to doubt the reality of all spiritual things, of all religious experience, ever to obtain this qualification?" Mabel spoke passionately, and hastily withdrew from the room before an answer could be given.

Keith looked questioningly into his friend's eyes as the door closed behind her straight, lithe figure.

"Only a little mist of skepticism which clouded her mind while in college, because of the hollowness of the life of those about her who professed to be the followers of the meek and lowly Jesus. Her heart is truer than her head, and her deliverance is certain," Glenn remarked, with a smile.

"Aye, no doubt, with your faith to hold on for deliverance. But what of those who are being turned out of the way, all about us, because of the worldly lives and empty profession of those who pose as disciples of the lowly Nazarine? Many of them have no believing friend to take hold of God for them, and their downward drift is rapid. An awful responsibility rests at the door of the worldly church of to-day. Sometimes my soul grows sick as I watch its

trend," was Keith's response, as he arose and walked to the open window.

An earnest conversation between the two friends followed, which was continued until the midnight hour warned them it was time to seek needed repose.

In the privacy of his own room Keith seated himself close to the window, and after a thoughtful survey of the beautiful grounds surrounding the mansion, which were brought into distinct view by the moonlight that flooded hill and dale with its silvery sheen, he drew a small Bible from his pocket and carefully turned to a certain chapter. After selecting a special verse he arose, placed his right hand on the open page, and, with his eyes closed, said aloud, in the tone one would use if addressing a personal friend close to one's side: "Father, I claim the fulfilment of this promise. Glenn has joined me, and together we have asked for the soul of Wallace Dupont. In these verses our Lord Jesus says: 'Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven. And whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. And if two of you shall agree on earth touching anything they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven.'

"Father, we will never turn this young man

loose. We, to-night, have bound him to thy throne by our prayers and our faith, and I do now more than ask, I claim the speedy fulfilment of this promise, which is sprinkled with the blood of Jesus, thine only begotten and well-beloved Son, and our Lord, in his behalf.

"I thank thee for the promise, and I thank thee for the faith thou dost give me to hold fast to it and to thee for this young man's deliverance from the powers of darkness which now surround him.

"Send thy Holy Spirit to him this very night, Father, and never let him rest until he is a saved soul. I ask this in the precious name of Jesus. Amen!"

A few moments later Kelso Keith was soundly sleeping. A peaceful smile hovered around his lips, and in his sleep he murmured the name of the One he loved so deeply—"Jesus!"

CHAPTER III.

A Close Call.

"WHAT a superb view. I did not fancy any such were to be found in this vicinity. This is equal to some of the gems among the Catskills," Keith remarked, as he and Glenn paused, with guns at rest, on the crest of a rocky ledge overlooking a picturesque ravine, and further on, a peaceful valley dotted with farm houses.

They were out on a hunting trip, but had as yet found nothing "worth bagging," as Glenn expressed it. He met his friend's words of pleased surprise with the rejoinder: "Which shows how much you yet have to learn about northern Alabama. This outlook—and there are others around Linwood—is equal to any found among the mountains of Tennessee."

There was a moment's silence in which each drank in the beauty of the scene before them. Then Glenn, with a low "hist!" brought his gun into position to fire. His alert eye had spied a large bird, which he supposed was an eagle,

on the topmost bough of an immense tree below them.

"No doubt that is the very fellow that has been making such heavy raids among our Plymouth Rocks," was the thought that caused him to take steady aim. "There's a nest in the top of that old oak, and if I have luck I may bring down a pair of the marauders, and afterwards capture their young."

Just as he fired, the bird arose in the air, and as the echoes reverberated among the rocky ledges and boulders of the "mountains," as the highlands of northern Alabama are called, his startled mate joined him. With an exclamation of impatience Glenn fired again, and then sprang hastily to a rock several feet below the one on which he had been standing, hoping thus to get a better aim.

Unfortunately this boulder was insecurely imbedded in the mountain side, and as the young man's heavy weight pressed it, it was torn from its position and went crashing down to the gorge below. Glenn went with it, and for a moment it seemed that his span of life was run. The rocks beneath were some two hundred feet from the point to which he had sprung, and the fall was almost a perpendicular one.

But Glenn, who had the nerve and training of

an athlete, kept his presence of mind, and swiftly caught the low-hanging boughs of a hardy tree that leaned far over the ravine, the roots of which were firmly fastened among the boulders of a narrow ledge just above the point whence the young man fell.

For two breathless seconds, as Keith watched, it seemed that the bough might not sustain Glenn's weight. The suspense, however, was only momentary, and in less time than it has taken to narrate the incident, he was safely ensconced among the thick boughs of the tree, close to the sturdy trunk, cheerily saying to his friend: "A close call, that. But I am all right, now, except the loss of my gun. No doubt I can get that by climbing down into the ravine."

"And also the eagle, for I believe your last shot brought him down," was Keith's relieved rejoinder.

It did not take Glenn many moments to reach the rock on which his friend stood. He was unharmed, with the exception of a scratch across one wrist.

"I thought, for a moment, you were booked for eternity," Keith remarked, as they turned to the path—with which Glenn was familiar—which led to the gorge below.

"I had the same idea, and I confess it startled

me. I thought I was ready to go whenever the call came, but that moment undeceived me."

He stopped, as he spoke, and faced his friend, adding: "I am shocked to know that I was actually afraid to die. Like Paul, I had fancied, until that moment, that death would be gain, for would I not be forever with my Captain? I know I love him; that I would be willing to be burned at the stake for his sake, if he should ask this. Then why did that awful shrinking come over me as I seemed to face eternity?"

"I think, possibly, I can answer you," was Keith's reply, given in a lower tone than usual; "for I had much the same experience some two years ago; and I found later on that, while I loved my Lord passionately, I was not just where he wanted me to be, nor was I where I could stand, unabashed, in his white presence."

Glenn's eyes asked the question his lips did not frame, and his friend continued: "I had not been where Paul went when God fully revealed to him his mission to the Gentiles. He went 'into Arabia, not conferring with flesh and blood,' and there Christ was revealed to him—as I have learned to read the Word—in a fulness he had not before known."

"Well?" Glenn's note of interrogation was almost impatient as Keith paused.

"Well, I 'went into Arabia'—my own private room—and for two days I fasted and prayed. At the end of that time something happened. I scarcely know how to tell you. I gave myself to God as never before, and he showed me he accepted the sacrifice. And he filled me with a peace and joy unspeakable. Since that hour I have been a changed man. I have been at death's door within the past four months, and instead of shrinking away, something within me began to praise God, and I found I was ready to stand in his unveiled presence, if his hour for this had really come."

Without a word, Glenn turned and resumed his way down the mountain side. Nor did he break the silence until he neared the point where he supposed the gun would be found. Then his remark bore no hint of the conversation that had preceded it.

"The gun should be just about here," was all he said, as he began to search among the rocks and bushes.

It could not be found, and much puzzled, the young men were about to go farther on to see if the carcass of the eagle could be discovered, when Keith saw a boy's head stealthily protrud-

ing from behind a pile of rocks, somewhat below and to their left. He quickly pointed in the direction, remarking: "No doubt he has the gun, and is in hiding until we get away."

A hurried descent to the boy's covert found this surmise to be correct. The gun, after a little searching, was found to be hidden under some closely matted vines and briars. The boy, who at first denied having seen the weapon, sullenly walked away when his theft was discovered.

"What a surly face. Looks as if the forces of evil had undisputed sway in his nature," Keith remarked. "Do you know him?"

"Merely his name. He is a bad lot. Crates Welldon is a disgrace to his family. His father and mother are dead. His sister-in-law, with whom he lives, is an upright, God-fearing woman. I have known her, in a sense, since the first hour I reached Linwood. But come on. We shall not bag a thing unless we hurry, and my housekeeper is expecting a savory lot of birds to help out with our six o'clock dinner."

With these words Glenn started on farther down into the ravine, with Keith by his side.

The boy sullenly climbed to the top of the ravine, muttering to himself as he did so: "Sum folks hez all they wants. Yas, 'n heaps mo' then they knows what ter do with. An' they's so all-

fired stingy they gits mad at er feller ef he tries ter keep what he's done found, an' hez er right ter."

This soliloquy will show the boy's moral outlook on life, and as he has many friends throughout the world, who take the same oblique survey of things that he is doing, no doubt the reader has long ago made acquaintance with some one or more of the widely scattered fraternity.

CHAPTER IV.

A Point Settled.

MABEL HILDEGARDE'S mental attitude toward her brother's friend assumed many varying aspects, as the days passed.

Sometimes she was irresistibly attracted, and felt he was, next to Glenn, the noblest type of manhood she had ever known.

Again she was wavering, declaring to her own heart that he was far too narrow in his creed to be a helpful friend to Glenn, or a safe counsellor for herself.

For, in spite of her varying moods, she found herself more and more frequently bringing her perplexities to him to solve, yet vigorously protesting against his solution when it had been given.

"I see Keene is to be in the city this week," Glenn remarked one morning at the breakfast table, as he laid aside the paper over which he had been glancing.

"If I were quite sure the theatre was the proper place in which a Christian should be found, I would propose that we run down and

hear him. I have not seen a play for over three years, and Mabel here, would be delighted to hear Keene again."

Keith looked interested, but made no response.

"I have never quite settled, to my own satisfaction," Glenn continued, "the matter of theatre-going. There are many reasons why it ought to be the means of education and culture along the higher intellectual lines. But my observation forces me to the conclusion that as the theatre is conducted, it is almost a failure when these are the ends sought. Have you fully settled this question, Keith? I know you sometimes patronized the play in the old days, though I used to fancy you went more to please me than yourself."

"The theatre question was settled for me, personally, soon after you and I parted," Keith rejoined, leisurely buttering a piece of toast.

He glanced up just in time to catch a glimpse of Mabel's eyes, full of questioning interest, fixed on his face. The next, they were veiled, and she was busying herself behind the tea-urn. He continued, with his face turned toward her, as if addressing his remarks to her: "I was deeply interested in the Young Men's Christian Association work that winter, and had

little time for the play, had I cared for it. But I had about reached the conclusion, anyhow, that the theatre was not the place where a child of God should be found." He paused an instant, and again Mabel's eyes were unveiled, and a quick flash of resentment leaped from their depths as she said:

"And yet the loveliest Christian I ever knew, Dr. Kenneth, president of the college where I was a pupil for four years, taught us exactly the contrary. He said it was not only the proper thing to do, but a duty we owed to ourselves to embrace every opportunity that came to us of hearing such actors as Booth, Barrett, Jefferson, Ward, Keene, and others of their standing."

"Many of our leading men agree with him," Keith remarked, then waited for her to continue, for he saw her heart was too full to keep silent:

"I am sure Dr. Kenneth was a sincere, conscientious Christian. He was almost the only person in college who thus impressed me. If his advice was incorrect, of course I want to know it, but I am certain the theatre, as he attended it, never harmed, but always helped him. He was an ardent lover of Shakespeare, and he declared it quickened all his intellectual powers to see one of his favorite plays rendered by such a man as Edwin Booth."

As she ceased speaking, Mabel's cheeks were aglow with emotion. Keith meditated a few moments, with his earnest eyes resting upon her drooping lids, before he spoke.

"I do not doubt the truth of what you say, nor would I try to refute the arguments which have convinced Dr. Kenneth that his position is correct. I have a personal acquaintance with him, and I know him to be a good man; one whom I respect as I respect few men I have ever met."

Keith's tone was gentle and sincere, and Mabel flashed him a grateful glance. He saw that he had disarmed her from her antagonistic attitude. Glenn now said: "But tell us how the matter was at last definitely settled for you?"

Keith continued, with his glance still directed toward Mabel: "Dr. Kenneth's arguments had weight with me until the winter to which I have referred. I knew, however, from my own experience, that the air of the theatre was not conducive to my spiritual health, however much it might stimulate my intellectual faculties. I found so much that appealed to the flesh and to the fleshly life, that sometimes I felt disgusted, and almost ready to give up all actors, even the purest, because of the accessories of the play. The higher-souled actor is not responsible for this atmosphere, nor has he power to purify it.

The theatre as I saw it, even then, belongs to the world, and her grip is tenacious. She surrounds it with all that she dare present that can appeal to man's lower nature, even when his intellectual is quickened and stimulated by the presentation of the highest achievements of art and genius."

"That is true," Glenn assented. "It seems impossible to dissever the play from its evil setting. I have felt that for some time."

"But it was from a different standpoint, altogether," Keith resumed, toying with his egg-spoon, for he was now too intensely in earnest to continue his breakfast, "that my attendance on the theatre was terminated. That winter I was present during a series of protracted services led by an able evangelist from the West. One day, in answer to a question which had been placed in the question box, he discussed theatre-going. He had, in former years, been convinced that it was proper for him to attend a play when any great actor of known integrity of character was to be on the boards. He had been led to this position by exactly the same course of reasoning that induces Dr. Kenneth to give his presence, and the weight of his influence, to the same high-toned presentations.

"Once, while in Chicago, a friend from across the ocean visited the distinguished speaker. The

evangelist cast about for some means of entertaining him, and was delighted to find that Booth was to render *Hamlet* during the period of this friend's stay with him. He carried him to witness this matchless presentation of one of the greatest productions of the human intellect, and it proved an evening of rare enjoyment."

Keith paused a moment, and Glenn said: "I can well understand that, for it quickens my pulses, even now, to recall how that prince of actors made that play a living reality to those who witnessed his marvellous rendering."

"The next morning," Keith continued, "the evangelist said he met upon the street a young man in whose salvation he had been for weeks deeply interested. He accosted him with much warmth, and asked him about his religious life. What was his chagrin to see the young fellow step back and say, in resentful tones: 'Don't dare ever again mention to me the matter of my personal salvation.'

"'Why not, Charley?' he inquired, much pained.

"'Because, sir, I saw you at the theatre last night, and I don't want any man who goes to a place like that ever to talk to me about the salvation of my soul.'[1]

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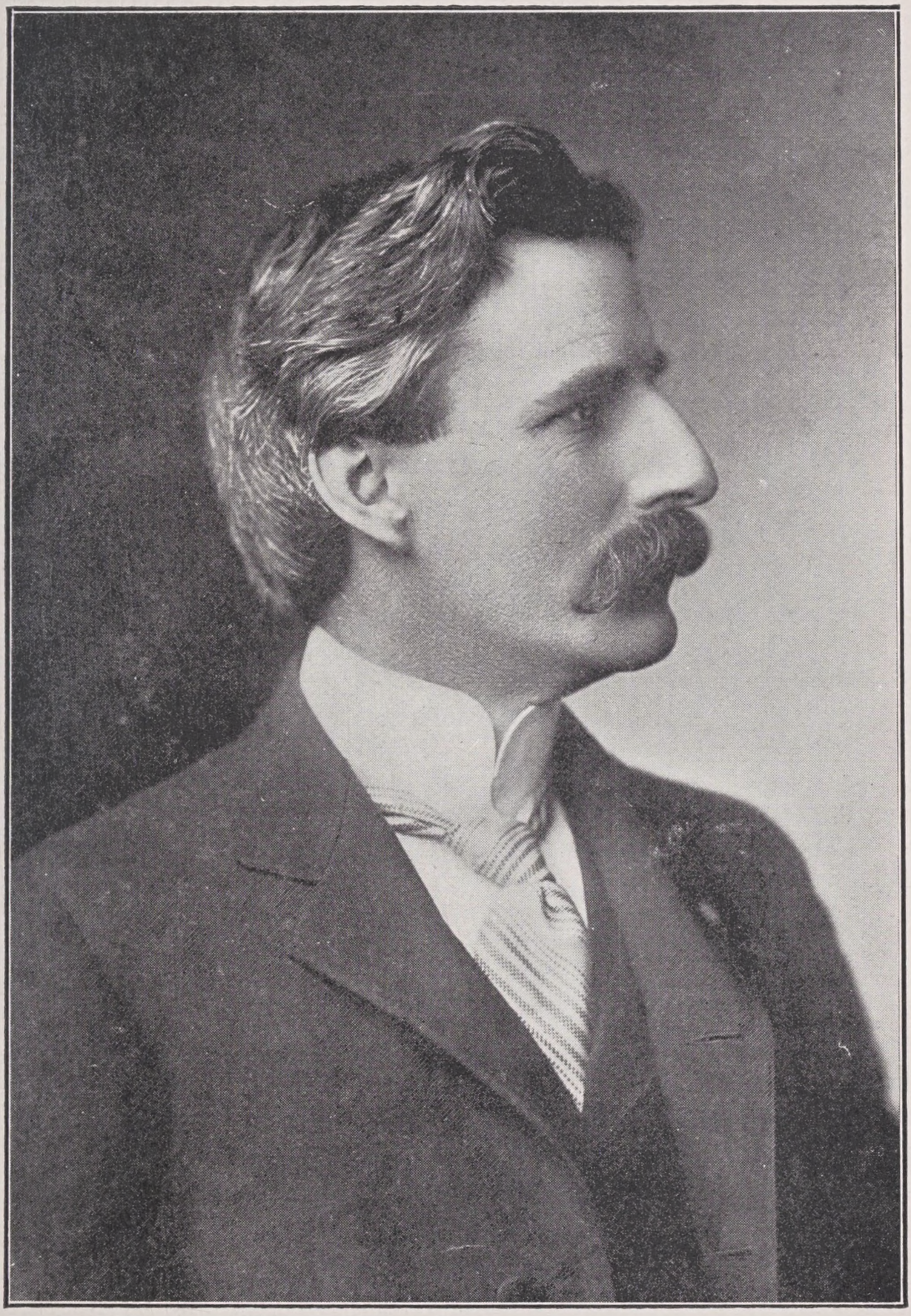
[1] This is a true incident.

"The evangelist tried to speak of Mr. Booth's high and unsullied character, but the young man interrupted him by saying: 'Booth is all right, but you know, and I know, that there were men and girls on that stage last night as wrong as sin can make them. I have been behind the scenes, sir, and I know all about it. I have no faith in any man's religion who goes to such places, no matter who plays.' The evangelist said that incident settled theatre-going for him forever. He dared not be a stumbling-block in any man's way. It also settled the matter for me," Keith added.

"It appears to me that this thought of becoming a possible stumbling-block to others, if applied to all our pleasures and recreations, would soon deprive us of all freedom," Mabel remarked, as they arose from the table. There was a tone of deep petulance in her voice. Evidently the thought was not a new one to her.

" 'All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient,' the great apostle wrote. Should it not be the same with us?" her brother asked, with a pained glance into her flushed face. "Dare we go on, seeking our own pleasure at the risk of causing one of God's little ones to offend?" Then, turning to his friend, he added, "Like you, Keith, the evangelist's experience settles the theatre question for me."



"As Mabel marked the deep thoughtfulness of his eyes."

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His friend looked into Mabel's dissatisfied face, and with kindling eyes, said: "It seems to me, Miss Hildegarde, that the dread of becoming a stumbling-block to some weak sister or brother, leads us into a life of glorious freedom. The freedom from self and its dominating power evinced in the joyful sacrifice of our own tastes and pleasures for the good of others. Is not this the key-note of God's Word—freedom from the power of sin and self, through Christ, that we may give our lives, in joyful sacrifice, back to him?"

A quick revulsion swept over Mabel's heart as these earnest words found their way into her soul. She was a proud girl, but she was also a frank one.

"I am condemned under the truth of your words," she said, in a low voice, after a moment's silence. Then she went to her brother, and with earnest eyes raised to his face, added: "I begin to see how very far I have drifted from our mother's teaching, and how my attitude, since I came to Linwood, must have grieved you. Ask the good God to show me the way back, for I am lonely and miserable since I wandered away from him."

With these words, spoken almost in a whisper, she left the room.

"You see our Father is still a prayer-hearing and a prayer-answering God," Glenn remarked to his friend, as the door closed behind her. "She is not out of the woods yet, poor child, but she has faced about in the right direction."

"She will be a rare woman when the Spirit of Christ once gains possession of her heart. I have seldom met so strong and yet so gentle a character."

A few days later, as the two friends were again alone together in the library, Keith remarked in a glad voice, as he looked up from a letter he had just been reading: "This letter is from Wallace Dupont, the owner of the pin I wore the evening I came to Linwood. You will recall you joined me in a pledge to pray for him."

"I remember. Rattlesnake fangs are apt to linger in one's memory, even though viewed under safe conditions," was Glenn's smiling response. Then he added, gravely, "I well remember our covenant for him."

"He writes for me to send him the Christian Endeavor pin. He has read the letters I gave him, and wants to join the 'Jesus Circle,' as he calls the Society I represent. Says he has never had anything get hold of him as those letters

have done, except my little talk with him on the train."

"Well, I do hope the young man has turned his face Zion-ward in truth. You must let me read those wonderful letters, Keith. I have often heard of Mr. Clark, and the good work in which he is engaged, but never understood much about it," was Glenn's reply, as he arose to answer a call at the telephone.

Keith's face wore an expression of joy that literally transfigured it. As he sought his own apartment, his heart and lips kept saying: "My Father, I thank thee. How I thank thee! Continue to move upon his heart, by thy Holy Spirit, until he knows Jesus in truth; until thy divine life has fully entered his soul, and his love for thy Son is the controlling motive and affection of his life."

CHAPTER V.

The Last Ride.

KEITH'S two weeks, the limit of his stay at Linwood, had almost expired.

The last week of his visit had thrown him much with Mabel, as some annoying business matters had so engrossed Glenn as to leave him little margin but the evening hours to devote to his friend.

It was during these days that Mabel discovered their guest's great delight in horses, and many were the merry rides they thereafter took together. Glenn sometimes accompanied them, but more frequently he was forced to remain with his lawyer, helping to untangle some knotty problems connected with the estate which demanded speedy settlement.

It was also during this close and unavoidable association that Mabel began to realize the combination of manly strength and daring, united with a calm gravity and gentle, though buoyant joyfulness, as well as an unobtrusive thoughtfulness and care for the comfort of those around

him, that made of Kelso Keith a unique and wonderfully attractive character.

"Our last ride," Mabel remarked, with an intonation of sadness. It was their guest's last afternoon at Linwood. They had drawn rein on a sunny slope, thickly dotted with yellow golden-rod, some distance from the highway, to enjoy a view of the valley which opened before them. They had early formed the habit of leaving the road to follow any bridle-path which promised to lead to an open view of the ravine and valley, which lay far below the level on which Linwood and its environments was situated.

"I shall always remember this point as 'Golden-rod Slope,' " Keith remarked, dismounting to gather some of the graceful flowers. "I think I never before saw it growing in such luxuriance. It seems a very forest of waving yellow plumes."

"I, too, will dismount," Mabel said. "The view from the rocks on the edge of the bluff must be lovely."

So it happened, a few moments later, that Mabel advanced toward the brow of the cliff alone, Keith remaining an instant behind to tether the horses.

He followed her quickly, and was about to

speak of the superb outlook over the valley, when something on the elevated rock by which she stood, close to her elbow, caught his attention.

It was a coiled serpent. There was not a moment to wait. The next instant, unless he could strike before it sprang, the deadly fangs would be buried in her arm. He stepped swiftly in front of her, and with a murmured: "Excuse me," threw his left arm between her and the rock, thereby forcing her gently to one side, at the same instant bringing his clenched right hand down on the snake's swaying head. The muscles of the hand, as delicate as the member appeared, were like cords of steel, and when it was lifted, the serpent lay bruised, stunned and harmless, but vigorously writhing, on the rock.

He stooped for a stone and soon ended its struggles, afterwards flinging it out of view over the boulders.

Mabel had not spoken. He turned to her, saying: "I hope you were not seriously frightened. He meant mischief, but you see there is now no danger."

"But you," she questioned, with pale lips; "are you not bitten? How could you strike it with your hand without meeting those terrible fangs? It was a spreading adder."

"I know. But my heavy riding glove was all

the protection I needed. I have not a scratch," and he smiled.

"Are you sure?" she urged. "Take off your glove and examine your hand."

He did so, to satisfy her, but laughed as he said: "I was too swift for him. Had I delayed he might have struck me."

She lifted the glove from the rock, where he had thrown it, and said: "Do not wear it again. It is possible some of the poison may remain in it."

And so, to humor her, he threw the glove over the ledge, and then said: "Now let us forget all about this unpleasant interruption of our afternoon. Our Father kept us from harm, and we can best praise him by being happy."

Mabel was silent, and Keith, to divert her, began recounting a pleasing incident that had come to him while he was abroad.

"This was before I met Glenn, and also before I had found my way back to my Father's house. I was a prodigal in those years, and knew not that I was lost, and miserable, and undone."

"Just what I feel myself to be to-day," was Mabel's low response.

"Suppose we sit here upon the rocks while I tell you the story that melted my heart, and turned my feet afresh toward the celestial city,"

Keith suggested, with an earnest glance into his companion's drooping face.

"I shall be glad to listen," and Mabel settled herself into a comfortable position and waited, expectantly, for him to begin.

"I had, at the time to which I refer, forgotten the love that had sought me in the days of my early youth; that had so saved and blessed me that, for a time thereafter, I would not have exchanged my joy for the imperial throne of the Czar of all the Russias," Keith began, in a meditative tone.

"But step by step I had wandered away from him; little by little my love had grown cold, until, at the period of which I speak, he whom my soul had so loved—the tender, patient Christ—was not in all my thoughts. At last I plunged headlong into the world, with all its follies and dissipations, and my heart seemed as deaf to his voice as though I had never heard him call my name. And then, just at the point when I seemed hopelessly lost from him, his infinite love and compassion found a way to reach me. It was while reading the test that came to the Forty Famous Wrestlers. Perhaps you are familiar with the story?"

Keith paused, but Mabel shook her head and murmured: "Go on."

"This is the way the story runs. It was so burned into my heart that night, when God met me through its printed pages, that I seem to see it to-day just as I read it then.

"The great Roman empire was divided between Constantine and Licinius, and each was bidding for popular favor. Constantine, with far-seeing policy, proclaimed the Christian religion, and Licinius, opposing, rallied more strongly to the heathen gods. To every prefect he sent forth the command that every soul in each place, and every soldier in the army should offer sacrifice publicly before the gods of Rome, under pain of death in case of refusal. Upon the border of a dark and frozen lake in Armenia lay encamped a cohort under Agricola. The men were drawn up to receive the imperial mandate. Before the gods of Rome and the 'divine Cæsar,' one by one the soldiers filed past and poured a few drops of wine as a libation.

"Swiftly the line went on, till one paused, a tall and splendid youth, who said: 'I owe no allegiance before that to my Master, Christ,' and stepped back from the ranks as if set apart. And the next, gallant and strong, drew back from his fellows, beside the first, and said: 'I owe no allegiance before that to my Master, Christ.' And a third noble athlete turned aside

from the path of safety, and he, too, said: 'I owe no allegiance before that to my Master, Christ.' Thus one after another, until forty stood back, each repeating the same dauntless words.

"When the ceremony was all done, the general called these men to him. He knew them to be superior in every martial exercise, so ready and skilful in their youthful vigor that they were called the 'Forty Famous Wrestlers.'

" 'What do you mean?' the general said. 'Do you think I intend to lose forty of my best soldiers for this nonsense? Why should you make yourselves conspicuous and different from all others? Why offer yourselves to death for a drop or two of wine? It is a mere form. I do not, myself, believe in the old gods. Besides, you are soldiers; this is a military order. Your general is responsible, and not you. You are Romans, and owe obedience to the emperor. Are you sure all those soldiers who obeyed Cæsar were wrong, and only you forty are right? It is only once, and a very little thing. You can still honor your Master, and surely this Christus will not object to such a trifle. Come, I will give you one more chance. To-morrow evening the ranks shall be formed again, and you may pour your libations; otherwise, you must go out, stripped of all clothing, upon that frozen lake.'

"The next day, just as dusk fell, the cohort stood before Agricola. Once more the imperial command was read, and also the alternative of the freezing night upon the icy lake with naked, defenceless bodies. They were also told that upon the shore would be a comfortable room, with warm bath and fire, food and wine, ready, all night, if any would turn back to its shelter.

"Life was sweet. Each heart held its thought of love, and home, and a fair future.

"But, without faltering, one stepped forward, laid down his sword and spear, his helmet and shield. Upon these he laid his warm cloak, his thick tunic and close-fitting under-garment. Then, stripped bare, he went from the torch-light into the dim darkness, calling bravely: 'Forty wrestlers, wrestling for thee, O Christ, claim for thee the victory, and from thee the crown!'

"And another put off his weapons and his garments, and with them life itself, and cried out: 'Forty wrestlers, wrestling for thee, O Christ, claim for thee the victory, and from thee the crown!' And still another, with strong heart, went forth, repeating the same words, until all the forty were gone to meet that frozen death, and far away could be heard their hymns of praise to him who had given himself for them.

"Fainter and fainter grew the song. As the dark night wore on the attendant at the bath waited in vain for one returning figure; but at last, in the dim dawn was seen one creeping white form faintly dragging itself up the bank; nearer it drew and nearer, till, just as the exhausted hand was lifted in denial of the Master, it fell lifeless.

"But he who watched, himself won to Christ by the fidelity of that night, sore at heart that even one should fail and that phalanx of forty be broken, cast off his robes and went forth, still keeping up the triumphant song: 'Forty wrestlers, wrestling for thee, O Christ, claim for thee the victory, and from thee the crown!'"

Keith's tone, although low, held the ring of a bugle, and as he paused Mabel drew a long, sobbing breath, and covered her face with her hands.

"From that hour my wanderings were over. I joined the ranks of those forty dauntless wrestlers, and through the grace of our matchless Friend and Lord, I am still there," Keith added, turning his gaze from the bowed face beside him to the open expanse of the valley below.

A silence, lasting many moments, followed. Then Mabel raised her face and said, in a voice that was almost a whisper: "I have read those

helpful letters you gave me, written by your friend, and to-day I feel that I am ready to join the Christian Endeavor Circle. From this moment I believe I can repeat, from my heart, the words of the pledge I am to sign if I join the band. I do want my life to be the very best possible, and I believe I can say just what I am asked to say when I place the pin upon my breast. And I think it will be a true help to me to wear it."

Keith smiled, and took the little case from his pocket containing the silver pins.

"They are all exactly alike," he explained, as he opened them to her view, and took one of them in his hand and held it toward her.

"I have a friend," he added, "who always wears hers at her wrist, pinned to her sleeve, where she can see it whenever she lifts her hand."

Mabel extended her hand to take it, but drew hastily back, exclaiming: "My courage fails me, after all. My heart longs to believe in Jesus Christ as a Saviour from sin, and as an ever-present Friend, who will enable me to live the 'love-life' the little booklet you gave me tells about. And a minute ago I felt I could wear this badge of the Society you stand for; but now my heart feels again like stone."

"'I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh,' is what our Father promises," Keith quickly responded.

He saw the temptation that was assailing her to doubt Christ's power to deliver, and he felt that a crisis was on her to decide for him, of which she was not aware.

"Suppose you test him, right now," he gently urged. "Heaven and earth may pass away, but his Word—never!"

Again Mabel bowed her head, and he saw her lips were moving in prayer.

Then she quietly extended her hand saying: "Yes, I will trust him; I believe he does forgive my wandering away from him, and also forgives the doubts I have admitted into my heart; and I do take him afresh, just now, as my Saviour, my Friend and my King."

She fastened the pin low on her bosom, where she could plainly see it whenever she bent her head, and murmured, in a low, solemn voice: "I am his—forever and forever his."

A moment later she added, with a ring of gladness vibrating through her tone: "And he is mine!"

As they rode homeward in the sunset, Keith said: "I want to give you two passages from the

Word of God that have been a great help to me, and to others. You will find them in Ezekiel, thirty-sixth chapter, twenty-sixth and twenty-seventh verses: 'A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh; and I will put my Spirit within you, and ye shall keep my judgments and do them.'

"You are now testing the first of these promises. Never pause until you have pressed on into the last one. Believe me, this will mean more to you than I can express or explain."

When they reached Linwood, Mabel was looking more restfully happy than for months, previous to this evening.

CHAPTER VI.

A Jewel and Its Setting.

KEITH had been gone from Linwood over a week, and Mabel, decidedly lonely, was standing on the piazza wondering what she should do with herself, when her brother approached.

"The tangle is unravelled at last, and the matter settled. My lawyer has dismissed me; so now I can be on hand to help you have a good time," he remarked, with a smile, as he noticed her disconsolate expression.

"That is pleasant news. But who is this coming down the walk? What a strange looking woman."

Mabel's glance was directed toward a tall, raw-boned female figure that was approaching them. Like the most of her class, for she belonged to the "poor whites" of Alabama, she looked as though life had been a struggle, and in the encounter she had been worsted.

Glenn greeted her kindly, presented his sister, and then inquired: "How is the little girl these days? I have been intending to carry my sister

down to see her for some time, but have not done so, as yet."

"I d'clar, Hit's ther beatenest chil' yer ever seed. Hit looks like er posy, an' Hit's ez peart ez er cricket. We-uns 'ull be proper glad ter see yer, ef you-uns wants ter cum."

Glenn glanced amusedly at Mabel. This woman had often been to Linwood, although Mabel had never before met her. She had become an object of special interest to Glenn because of her peculiarities, and also because of some bits of her history with which he had become acquainted.

"How long has the child been with you?" he asked.

"Jis' three year. Hit's jis' that ter-morrer, since Hit's mother drapped off. We-uns allus gits up a cake fur Hit in honor o' ther 'casion. Pore creeter. Hit do talk er pow'ful lot erbout Hit's rich kinfolks. 'Pears like if they air ez rich ez Hit tells on, they would er hunted Hit up afore this."

The woman stood by the piazza steps, with her arms akimbo, and her blue sun-bonnet pushed back from her face, revealing sharp features almost painful in their thinness. But a kindly expression played over them, and Mabel felt a great pity well up in her heart toward her,

for she could see how hard and barren life must have been for Nancy Welldon.

"We could ride down to-morrow, Mabel, if you would like to see the child," Glenn said, seeing the interest the woman's words and appearance had aroused in his sister's heart.

The woman caught the words, and said: "Do cum. Hit 'ull please ther chil' ter see ye. Hit kinder mopes, these days, er waitin' fur Hit's brother, what Hit lows air cumin' fur Hit soon."

"It is lovely weather for a ride through the woods," Glenn continued. "The roads are so rough down in that direction, unless we go around by the pike, that we will have to make the trip on horse-back. Suppose we set apart the morning for it."

"That will be delightful. Yes, we will come, if the weather is good," Mabel said to the woman, and then she and Glenn strolled away.

"I am quite curious to see the child," she added, when they were out of Nancy's hearing. "Did you notice that she always speaks of her as 'Hit?'"

Glenn laughed. "She is quite a character. It is interesting to hear her talk."

"Who is the child, anyway?" Mabel asked.

"No one knows. Her mother was a refugee from the yellow-fever, the neighbors tell me.

She died of consumption at Nancy's house after being there a few weeks. She was of foreign birth, very beautiful and very poor. She was a fine seamstress, and sewed for Nancy, and for others who helped her, as long as she could hold a needle. She also played on the guitar, and had an exquisite voice. She died suddenly, from hemorrhage, and Nancy has kept the child, who is a cripple, ever since. That is all I know."

"Has she no name but 'Hit?'" Mabel inquired, with a smile.

"Yes, her mother called her Nita. That sounds like a Spanish name. I am told she is like her mother, really beautiful, and I shall be glad to visit Nancy's cabin. I have always intended doing so, but have never found just the right time until now. It will be delightful to go with you, and it may be we can find ways to make life a little less hard for the poor orphan, as well as for her kind benefactress. Many of these 'hill people' are bitterly poor, and it means much for Nancy to have cared for this child during these years."

He did not add, what was the truth, that ever since he had learned of the case, generous baskets of provisions had, from time to time, found their way from Linwood to Nancy's poor little cabin.

Glenn believed in the Bible rule: "Let not th-

left hand know what thy right hand doeth," and no human being knew of the many streams of charity which issued from his heart and purse to enrich the lives of those about him.

The next morning, when he and Mabel reached the lonely cabin in the woods, their first glance at the orphan told them a sorrowful truth. The child was some seven or eight years of age, but very small for her years, and in spite of the twisted ankle which made her a cripple, she was rarely beautiful. But there was a vivid flush upon her cheeks, and a peculiar lustre in her soft eyes, accompanied by a frequent hollow cough, which told of consumption.

She was not shy in the sense in which many children are. She responded to Mabel's kindly greeting with a pleased smile, but turned at once to Glenn. Her speech was refined, and plainly enunciated for a child, being wholly unlike the rude vernacular spoken by the hill people.

"Did you come in a big carriage?" she asked, wistfully.

"No, we came on horseback," he replied. His tone was full of tender compassion, and Nita felt his unspoken sympathy. She came a step nearer to him and said, with a faint little brogue that proclaimed her foreign birth: "I thought, perhaps, you might be my older brother, and that you had come to take me home.

My mamma said he was beautiful. But she told me he would come for me in a big, shining carriage. It will be splendid to ride with him all the way home, won't it?"

"Are you fond of riding?"

"Yes, indeed. I rode every day, once, before my mamma came away from the big houses, and the people. And when my brother comes for me I will ride again." Her eyes were luminous with hope and expectation. Mabel felt a pang in her heart as she thought: "He must come soon, or she will be gone."

"Hit's plumb crazy 'bout ridin'," Nancy said, apologetically. "Hit talks so much erbout hit that I hev 'lowed ter take Hit ridin' on ter the keers, but I hain't never done hit. Hit's two mile ter ther station, an' I 'lowed Hit couldn't never walk thet fur on Hit's crutch, no how."

Mabel's face brightened. She turned to her brother. "Could we not take her driving in the dog-cart? The road is not too rough to bring it down, is it?"

"I think we could manage it," Glenn answered, noticing the look of delight in Nita's eyes.

"Don't you think, perhaps, you are my brother? 'Cause I love you," the child said, appealingly, looking into his smiling face.

Glenn felt no inclination to smile over this artless confession. There was something in the tone and in the wistful earnestness of the child's eyes that touched him deeply. His reply was very gentle: "No, I am not really your brother. But you can play that I am, if you choose; and this young lady," turning to Mabel, "shall be your sister."

For the moment the child seemed contented, and smiled fondly up into Mabel's sympathetic face. The next instant a spasm of cruel coughing racked her frame. Glenn involuntarily steadied her with his arm.

"Hit's cough don' git no better," Nancy said, with a troubled sigh. "Hit's coughed like that sense las' Thanksgivin' day. 'Pears like Hit's er-wastin' er-way."

Mabel noticed the almost transparent fragility of the slender hands, and mentally assented.

Before they left the little cabin a promise was made to come the next day, and take Nita a long drive in the dog-cart.

"What a lovely wee lassie she is," Mabel commented, as they rode homeward, and thereafter the brother and sister always spoke of her as "wee lassie." The little waif had found a warm place in both hearts, and was destined to exert an imperishable influence on their lives.

CHAPTER VII.

The "Wee Lassie's" Outing.

As they rode homeward, Glenn and Mabel planned not only to take Nita driving, but also to give her a ride on the train.

So, early next morning, they drove down to the cabin. Nancy's surprise at seeing them before the hour named for the outing, was soon forgotten in the delight of the longer excursion on the train, in which she was invited to join them.

"I hain't never ben onter one o' them keers," she said. "They's sich pesky screechin' things, I hev ben a'most afeared on 'em. But I'll go 'long so's ter be handy ef Hit's tuk sick."

She carefully dressed Nita in an over-ruffled, pink-flowered gown, which, to her rustic eyes, was the embodiment of beauty. But neither this, nor the stiffly starched white bonnet which was placed over the child's shining curls, could hide the orphan's loveliness.

Nita's cheeks were dyed a rich crimson, and her eyes danced with pleasure, when at last the dog-cart started on its way along the woodland road.

Nancy was to meet them at the station, and as

she struck off through the woods with the swinging gait which carries the "hill people" over long stretches of territory in a brief space of time, her angular face bore the traces of a deep, but pleasureable excitement. When she reached the station, however, she entered the car slowly and distrustfully. One glance at Nita relieved her mind of all anxiety as to her welfare. Glenn and Mabel vied with each other in ministering to her needs and entertainment, and she looked the picture of childish happiness. This left Nancy free to amuse herself as she chose.

She seemed anxious to grasp the mystery of the huge, snorting monster which "draws this yere kerridge, an' which skeers me plumb sick," she said to Mabel, in an awed tone, as the train started on its way.

For some minutes after they got under headway, she held to the arm of the seat where she sat with the grip of one suffering from great terror; but as the train glided smoothly along the rails, her fear seemed to subside.

But as they neared the first station, and the cars shook, jolted, and finally stopped, she cried out, with a wild glance at Glenn: "I knowed 'tud' be so. She's done struck er stump." [1]

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[1] **This, like so much in connection with Nancy's history, is a true incident.**

Smothered laughter from some young men seated behind her, greeted these words. She pushed back her large sun-bonnet, turned toward them, and said, resentfully: "Ef 'tain't er stump, what be hit? My breath's a'mos' stove out, anyway. Sich er plumb shakin' up ez thet air war, ain't nuthin' ter larf at."

Mabel smilingly explained the cause of their stoppage, and assured her there was no danger. The woman sank back into her seat, and did not speak another word until their destination was reached. This was the beautiful little city of Huntsville, the sight of which aroused Nita to happy talkativeness.

"It's like the city where I lived with my mamma once," she said, looking up and down the streets with childish pleasure. "But she lives in another city now," she added; "a city full of bright light, and shining stones and jewels. She told me all about it, and I'm going there, too, after awhile; after my brother comes."

"She is nearer that city than she knows," Mabel thought, with a tender glance into the shining eyes. "Her brother must come soon or he will find her gone."

They went into a restaurant, connected with a large hotel, and Glenn ordered a dainty luncheon

for four. The waiters gazed upon the quaintly assorted party with ill-concealed curiosity. But Glenn and Mabel were blind to everything but that Nita should enjoy her outing.

But the child could eat nothing. In vain they urged the various appetizing dishes upon her. She declined everything, until a beautiful mould of gelatine and some slices of delicate layer-cake were brought in.

Nancy said, coaxingly: "Jis' take er bite o' this yere pretty striped bread, honey, dear. An' er mouthful o' this yere trimblin' stuff. I 'low hit 'ull mek yer feel real peart-like."

Glenn hid a smile of amusement behind his napkin. The child, yielding to Nancy's entreaties, consented to taste the jelly. She found it so refreshing that an entire saucer was emptied before she set it aside.

As Glenn prepared to settle the bill, Nancy drew him cautiously to one side. Her face was solemn, and a curious expression of triumph and cunning crossed it as she said, in a shrill whisper: "Yer hain't er goin' ter pay fur what we diden' eat, air ye? I never teched that 'ar cu'yus bread an' shakin' stuff. What Hit et hain't wuth mor'n er nickel." Then she went closer to him and whispered: "Lump thet in wi' my dinner, an' hit'll jis' mek one squar' meal. So, don' yer pay fur but three on us."

Glenn smilingly assured her he would do the right thing, and she returned to Nita's side, well satisfied. To her poverty-pinched mind the saving of a nickel was a large sum.

Mabel now noticed that the child looked weary, so a room was gotten, and while Glenn amused himself over a magazine, the little one enjoyed a refreshing sleep. Mabel sat by her side holding one of her wasted hands within her own while she slept, for Nita begged for this, saying: "You are so pretty and kind you make me think of my mamma. She always held my hand when I went to sleep. Could you do it?" And when the frail fingers were closely clasped in the stronger ones, the wee lassie drowsily murmured: "Nancy wanted to hold my hand at first, after my mamma went away; but her hands are so hard I didn't like her to do it. But your hands are soft. I like to feel them; they are like velvet."

Her speech was so quaintly precise, and so unchildlike in its accurate pronunciation of words, that Mabel wondered again and again who the poor dead mother could have been who had trained her child so carefully that the three years spent with Nancy Welldon had failed to mar the purity of her language.

Her sleep was brief, but she seemed greatly

refreshed, and when Nancy—who had been amusing herself on the sidewalk in front of the hotel absorbing the strange sights and sounds of the city—saw her, she expressed her pleasure at the child's improved appearance by saying: "Yer looks ez fresh ez er posey, honey, dear. An' I's plumb glad yer duz, fur thar's ther beatinest things ter be seed in this yere place I ever hearn tell on. An' yer'll hev ter be pow'ful peart ter git erbout ter see 'em."

CHAPTER VIII.

A Happy Day Ended.

DURING the afternoon Glenn asked Nita if she would not enjoy a carriage drive around the city.

The child gazed with curiosity upon an electric car that was just passing, and said: "Could you take me riding in one of those cars? They look so pretty running along without horses or anything to draw them."

"Thet's er fac'," Nancy said, nodding her head toward the passing car. "Hit 'pears like sperrets mus' be er-totin' em erlong. I's watched an' watched, an' thar ain' nary hoss nur mule nur screachin' thing er-drawin' 'em. Hit do beat me how they gits erlong. I done got down onter my knees while Hit ware er-takin' Hit's wink o' sleep, ter look under 'em ter see ef ennybody ware under thar er-shovin' 'em erlong. But thar wasn't nary pusson ter be seed. How duz they git over them iron rails, ennyway?"

Glenn gave a merry laugh and tried to explain to her the means of locomotion. This only added to her perplexity, and while they were

waiting for the coming car, she stepped back, and steadily refused to join them in their ride, saying: "Hit don' stan' ter reason thet ther A'mighty wants his lightnin' fotched down ter run them thar things with. I's er-feared ter ride onter hit. God mought let er little streak git loose, an' whar would Nancy Welldon be, then?"

So they left her standing on the sidewalk, with her hands resting upon her hips, her big sun-bonnet pushed back, and with an expression of doubt and fear upon her face that caused Mabel to say, with dimpling cheeks: "Poor thing. She thinks we are doomed to destruction."

Everything delighted Nita. They took her into a music store, and the obliging clerk who was in charge sat down, at Mabel's request, before one of the grand pianos, and dashed off a spirited waltz for the child. This pleased her, but she looked pleadingly into Mabel's face, saying: "Can't you make music? I want to hear you sing."

So Mabel placed herself at the instrument, and she and Glenn sang from memory one of those sweet old Scotch ballads whose minor chords sink deeply even into careless hearts.

The child gave a sigh of contentment as she

said: "That was beautiful! They sing all the time in the city where my mamma lives. Won't you sing again?"

Glenn, at his sister's request, took her place before the instrument, and after touching the keys softly, began to sing: "Jesus, Lover of my Soul."

Nita listened as one entranced. Glenn's voice was both rich and mellow, and as he loved music, he sang from a full heart. As he closed the second stanza he turned, saying: "Do you like that as well as the other?"

"It was lovely. It was about Jesus. My mamma has gone to stay where Jesus lives. She told me all about him. And I do love him so much. Did you ever see him?" As she asked this question she looked searchingly into Glenn's face.

"Yes, I know him, wee lassie; and I, too, love him. He is worthy of our love."

A quick light sprang to Mabel's eyes. She pressed her fingers against the silver pin she wore on her breast, and her heart whispered: "I, too, love him. Oh! that I were worthy of his love."

"Now we will find something else that you will like," Glenn remarked, as he arose and took the child's hand in his strong clasp. "This

young gentleman has been very kind to us. Don't you want to thank him, wee lassie?"

"Yes." She raised her soft eyes to the clerk's smiling face and said, hesitatingly: "I am very much welcome to you. And I want you to live in the beautiful city with Jesus and my mamma, 'cause you are good. You can play on a harp there all the time, if you want to. It never snows there, and the sun shines all the time. And they don't ever have any ice or cold winds. Nancy says so. Won't you be glad to live there? I will. And I am going, real soon. Just as soon as my brother comes for me."

A flush passed over the young man's face as he answered in a low voice, seeing that she was waiting for a reply: "Yes, very glad. Suppose you ask Jesus, when you get there, to make me ready to live with him."

"Yes, I will. Good-bye."

Something that looked very much like a tear dimmed the young salesman's eyes as he gently clasped the child's fragile fingers.

"Better ask him yourself. He is waiting, right now, to make you ready," Glenn said, with an earnest glance and a friendly hand-shake, as they passed into the street.

They soon found a bird-store, and great was Nita's wonder in hearing the parrots talk.

"Now it is time for us to go back and find Nancy," Glenn said, at last, and soon the car was bearing them on their way.

As they neared the point where they had left her, Mabel heard boyish cries and laughter, and looking quickly from the car window she saw Nancy standing in front of a cigar-store. Her hand was raised high in the air, and they could hear her talking excitedly as she slowly backed away from the door.

"She is talking to that wooden Indian," Glenn said, with sudden laughter, in which Mabel joined. "She thinks he is alive, and that his tomahawk is raised to scalp her. Hear her expostulating with him. The boys have caught on to the fun now. See them urge her on. We must get off and take her away."

Some half dozen lads were gathered about Nancy, as Glenn ran up to her. One of them cried: "You'd better run, ma'am. He's a dreadful feller. There's blood on his tomahawk, now, where he scalped a girl the other day. He just loves to cut women to pieces."

"Ther ugly heethin! An' I wuzn't even er noticin' of him till he riz right up wi' thet thar ax o' hisn, pinted right ter my head."

Glenn led her away, and explained to her the innocent character of her supposed enemy.

The trip home was an unalloyed delight to Nita. She was very tired, but Glenn arranged for her to rest her head against his breast. From this comfortable position her eyes drank in the full beauty of the scenery.

The railroad wound and curved about in true mountain fashion, and the views disclosed to watchful eyes were often inspiring. The witchery of sunset, and then of twilight, added to the charm.

Nita drew a long breath of delight.

"I don't think I can be much happier than I am now when I go home with my brother," she said, with a fond glance into Glenn's attentive face.

"Do you remember your brother?" he gently asked.

She raised her head to gaze more fully into his eyes. Her bonnet had been laid aside, and her loose curls fell in a rich shower about her face and shoulders. She looked so fair, so spirituelle, so ready to float away upon the first chill blast, that Glenn involuntarily sighed.

"No," she softly answered, "but I shall know him, for my mamma talked about him so often. I think you are like him. He suffered dreadfully for me, once, and my mamma said I must

always love him for it. And I do. I hope he will come soon."

Again Glenn sighed, and Mabel, who had caught the child's words, echoed it. "He must come soon, or he will be too late to find her," was the thought of each heart.

The drive from the station to Nancy's little cabin, through the moonlight, was one of weird and impressive beauty. Evidently Nita's sense of the beautiful was largely developed for one of her years, for when Mabel and Glenn supposed her to be sleeping, she lay so quietly in Mabel's arms, she said, in almost a whisper: "Is it dear God that makes me so happy?"

"Yes, dear," Mabel answered, bending to press a kiss on her white forehead.

"And does he make the world so beautiful just for us?"

It was late in September, but the air was as balmy as May. The full moon flooded hill and valley with silvery light, and the earth did seem indeed, at that hour, a place of unalloyed beauty and joy.

"Not only for us, wee lassie, but for all his children," Mabel responded, gently.

Glenn lifted her in his arms and carried her straight to her little cot in Nancy's room, when they reached the cabin.

Nancy's gratitude for the pleasures of the day were voluably expressed, but Nita only said, with her expressive eyes fixed upon Glenn's face: "I am going to ask dear God to let you and your sister come and live with us all the time, when my brother comes and carries me home. I know he is coming soon; real, real soon."

CHAPTER IX.

Nita's Kinsfolk.

IT was two days after the outing before Glenn and Mabel found time for another visit to their little protégé.

Nancy met them in a state of strong excitement.

"They's done cum fur Hit," she said, nodding her head toward the room where Nita passed her days.

"Who has come?" Glenn questioned.

"Hit's rich kinfolks. Et least er fine lawye'-man rid up ther mounten, yist'day, an' he ax me all erbout Hit. Little 'nuff I know, 'ceptin' ez how I loves Hit ez if Hit ware my own flesh 'n blood. He 'lowed Hit's gran'mother and brother ware er-sarchin' fur Hit, an' hed ben er-sarchin' fur two year an' mo'."

"Whose child does he think she is?" Mabel asked.

"Hit b'longs ter er plumb gran' fambly, he 'lows. He called 'em Delgrindo, er some sich name."

Glenn and Mabel did not wait longer to hear

Nancy's revelations, but passed into the room where Nita was sitting.

The child looked wan and tired. She brightened as she saw who were her visitors.

"Did Nancy tell you?" she asked, almost in a whisper.

"Yes. Are you glad?" It was Glenn who spoke.

She shook her head and sighed, and placed her hand upon her breast. "Something here tells me it is not my brother who is coming."

At this moment there came the sound of wheels, and a handsome carriage stopped in front of the little cabin.

"They's done cum!" Nancy said. "Ther lawye'-man 'lowed he ware goin' ter bring 'em ter day, ef he could." She went toward the door to receive them.

Nita leaned eagerly forward, and looked out.

"See! They are driving black horses. My mamma said my brother would come for me with white horses," she said, distressfully.

Mabel pressed her hand, which was trembling, but made no reply. Glenn stepped back into the doorway of the adjoining room, and Mabel followed him, as the visitors entered.

An old lady, elegantly attired in black silk,

followed by a dark, handsome young man of about Glenn's age, walked, without ceremony, into the room where Nita sat. A little wiry man, with alert eyes and a bland smile, followed them. Glenn knew this man must be the lawyer of whom Nancy had spoken.

They accepted the chairs which Nancy stiffly proffered. Then the old lady adjusted her eye-glasses, and said, with a wistful glance at Nita:

"So this is the child, Mr. Clinton?"

"This is the child." The lawyer's voice was brisk and business-like. "She bears the family name, Juniata, which has been shortened into Nita. This woman tells me that the mother left a locket with a picture in it. Will you bring it to us, my good woman?" He addressed this request to Nancy.

The old lady did not seem to hear what he was saying. She was absorbed in the study of Nita's face.

"She is like Leon," she said, in a low voice full of emotion. "Her eyes have just the expression of his. I believe she is his daughter."

She arose and went to Nita's side. The dark young man followed. Both stood, for some moments, silently studying the lovely face upturned to them.

"Yes, she is like the Delgondos," the latter

said; but his face expressed no pleasure. A heavy frown rested upon his brow.

The lady addressed Nita in a gentle voice, tremulous with emotion: "My child, would you not be glad to find your relatives? Would it not make you happy to know that I am your grandmother? And that this young man is your dear brother?"

"Only her half brother," the young man said, quickly.

Nita's answer sent a shock through Mabel and Glenn as they listened.

"No! no! no! He is not my brother. He is not," she cried, with passionate earnestness. "I don't like him. I am afraid of him."

She covered her face with her hands, and they could see that she was shuddering violently.

The old lady looked shocked and disappointed. The young man gave a careless laugh and said, pointing to the child's twisted ankle: "She will not reflect much glory on the name, even if she proves to be the missing child."

There was a sneer upon his lips. "She looks like the Delgondos, certainly, but that proves nothing," he added.

"This is Leon's child. I am sure of it," responded the old lady.

"If so, it is to be hoped the accursed Protest-

ant blood of her mother will not show itself in her." There was contempt in his tone, and Glenn, as he listened, felt an involuntary desire to throw him out of the window.

The old lady bent over Nita, and essayed to take her hand. But the child moaned out: "Take him away. Do, please, take him away. He is not my brother. His eyes hurt me."

The young man bit his lip, and the glance he flashed upon the little cripple was not pleasant to see. The grandmother said to him: "She is ill. Her hands are feverish. We must humor her. You would better leave us."

"Yes, do go. Please go. I am afraid," pleaded Nita, raising her face. Tears were streaming down her cheeks.

"Let us go to the carriage," the young man said, offering the old lady his arm. "There is no use waiting here. The woman can bring us the locket out there. Mr. Clinton must see that the chain of evidence is complete before we recognize this child as the missing heir. We must not rush matters."

It was evident he was not anxious to find in this beautiful waif the object of their search.

Glenn, who was intently studying his face, said to himself: "He is cruel and relentless. God grant wee Lassie may never fall into his

power. There is murder in his eyes as he looks at her."

After a few more vain efforts to win the child's confidence, the old lady permitted herself to be led to the carriage.

The lawyer followed, briskly rubbing his hands and saying: "She will soon learn to love you, madam. She has been so long among these people that the sight of persons of her own rank excites her a little."

Nancy Welldon appeared at this juncture, carrying a small gold locket in her hand. Glenn, who had stepped to the window, saw the old lady open it. As she did so she gave a faint cry: "It is Leon's picture. The child is his daughter."

"Then our course is plain," said the lawyer, cheerfully. "I will have all the papers ready, and the evidence complete, in a few days. The sooner we get the child away the better."

"Yes, in a week, at farthest, we may hope to have it settled, and take her home." Then she turned to Nancy: "We will pay you well, my good woman, for your care of the child. Try and get her in a better condition, and strong enough to stand a long journey. Here; use this in helping to make her comfortable," and she dropped a piece of gold into Nancy's hand. The next moment the carriage rolled away.

CHAPTER X.

Going Home.

WHETHER the excitement of her relatives' visit was too great for the child's strength, or whether the fell disease which had her in its grasp had run its course, no one could tell. But after that afternoon Nita rapidly sank.

Glenn and Mabel visited her daily. It was found to be so painful to her to even suggest that the Delgondos were the kinsmen of whom her mother had told her, that all who were about her tacitly agreed not to mention them in her presence. They also humored her idea that these were not her relatives at all, but that her true kinsfolk might come at any time to take her to the beautiful home about which she never tired talking.

Glenn summoned the ablest physician within reach. He only shook his head. Nita was beyond the aid of human skill to help.

Again and again she would say, with lustrous eyes: "That man who came was not my brother. But my brother will come, soon, in a big, shining

carriage, with white horses. And he will take me in his arms. He loves me dearly."

When she would thus talk, Glenn would turn away.

"If those people really claim her, and try to carry her away, she will die at once. God grant she may be at rest before they come again," he said to Mabel, who echoed his sigh.

Nancy hovered about the little couch with a devotion that was pathetic. Even her surly brother-in-law, Crates, the only other member of her little household, became almost gentle when he entered the sick room.

"Here be some posies fur ye," he said one morning, handing Nita a lovely cluster of blossoms which he had found in a sheltered woodland nook.

A happy smile curved the sick child's lips.

"Will you bring me some when my brother comes?" she eagerly asked.

"Yas. I knows jis' whar they grows." Then he hesitated, but added, in a low voice: "I seed er fine kerredge, an' hit druv white hosses, down ter ther station this mawnin'."

Nita's face flushed. "Oh! perhaps it was my brother. Maybe he will be here to-day."

The boy went out of the room, drawing his rough sleeve across his eyes.

"Hit ware er hearse I seed," he explained to Mabel, who followed him; and he added, in a low voice: "Hit ware er-toten' Jedge Lee's boy ter ther cemet'y. Hit 'ull be ther next 'un toted thar." He indicated to whom he referred by a backward jerk of his thumb toward Nita's room.

"Poor Crates," the child said, a little later, as she caressed the blossoms the boy had brought her. "He says I help him to be good. When I am gone I will ask dear God to send some one else to help him. Crates wants to be good, but he says he can't be, 'less I help him."

"Can't Nancy help him? She loves him, and is willing to do more for him than any one else," Glenn questioned, humoring her train of thought.

Nita shook her head. "I don't see why, but Crates says she makes him feel wicked all over when she talks to him; and sometimes when I tell him about being good, so he can live with my mamma and with dear Jesus, he just cries."

A quick vision of the boy's sullen face the day he had hidden the gun, and his theft had been discovered, crossed Glenn's mind. He could hardly conceive of him as being really melted, even under Nita's gentle influence, yet he responded: "It must be because our wee Lassie walks so close to God that she can help him."

Evidently the child did not understand him. She only said: "Dear God will be sure to send some one to help him be good, when I go away, 'cause he doesn't want him to be bad."

These simple words sank into Glenn's heart, and in the after days bore rich fruitage.

The next morning when he and Mabel reached the cabin, they found the child rapidly sinking. She could only speak in a whisper. Nancy sat by the couch with her apron over her face. She removed it as they entered the room, disclosing red and swollen eyes. "I done 'lowed I'd send fur Parson Brown. But Hit ware plumb sot agin' hit. Hit 'lows Hit's brother air er-comin' ter-day, sarten, ter take Hit home."

A sob broke Nancy's voice.

Glenn leaned over the little form, and Mabel took one of the wasted hands within her own. It was icy cold. Nita opened her eyes and saw them bending over her. A smile irradiated her face, and she whispered, brokenly:

"They are—almost—here—my—kinsfolks—all—in—white. Mamma—came—to—see—me—last—night. There — is —a—big—house—a—mansion—she—said—all— ready — for — me. My—Elder—Brother—went—to prepare —it—for—me. He's—almost—here. I—am —so—glad."

A moment later a flash of radiant joy overspread her countenance. She murmured, addressing some one who was invisible to those about her: "I—am—all—ready. Oh!—I—didn't—under—stand. I'm—so—glad!—so—glad!—Jesus—Brother! Yes—I'm—ready."

Even as the last faintly-whispered words died on the air, her kinsmen in white bore her away. Mabel said, smiling through her tears: "Now it is all plain whom she meant. Her ideas were confused, but her Elder Brother has come and borne her to the mansion he had prepared for her. How thankful I am God permitted me to see her go."

"I could almost see the chariot of fire that bore her away," Glenn softly and reverently responded.

Two days after the simple funeral services were over, Nancy appeared at the Hall.

"We-uns air plumb broke up," she said, mournfully. "Sence Hit's done drapped off, thar don' 'pear ter be nuthin' left ter live fur. I cayn't hev no heart ter work, no ways. Hit's pow'ful lonesome-like down in ther cabin. Cayn't you-uns ride down ter see me in ther mawnin'? Crates air gone all day, yer knows, 'cause he's at work."

Glenn promised to visit her, and dropped

some silver pieces into her toil-worn hand, and Mabel hastened to beg some appetizing food from their housekeeper for her to take home with her. As the basket containing this was placed in her hand, she awkwardly dropped a courtesy and turned away. Mabel and Glenn watched her as she went down the lonely road, and the latter said:

"All the color seems to have faded out from her life. She is more lonely than we can guess. She gave of her best to wee Lassie. We must never forget to look after Nancy. Let us ride down to see her as often as possible."

Mrs. Delgondo's lawyer rode up to the cabin a few days after the child was buried. He seemed greatly shocked to hear of her death.

A few weeks later the grandmother had Nita's remains borne away, that the casket might rest with those of her proud ancestors. This was done with much pomp and ceremony. She also compensated Nancy Welldon very liberally for her care of the child.

Glenn and Mabel never learned anything more of Nita's history. How she and her mother became lost to so wealthy and influential a family as the Delgondos, could only be a matter of conjecture.

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A BRIDLE-PATH.

CHAPTER XI.

A Crisis.

IT was the last week in October. Never had earth seemed so fair to Mabel Hildegarde as now. There was a sweet joyousness about her, these days, that her brother had never before witnessed.

One evening, as they were sitting together by an open window, for the air was as mild as an April night, Glenn remarked on the change he observed in her.

"Yes," she responded, smiling under his loving gaze, "I am happier than ever before. You helped me, and Mr. Keith helped me, but God used our wee Lassie to bring me out into his clear light and love. As I stood by her bed, that day, and heard her dying recognition of the love and presence of our Lord, the Christ, the last vestige of doubt in my soul was swept away, and I could say from a full heart: 'My Saviour and my God!' Life has been a different thing to me since that hour."

"Thank God for our wee Lassie. She came

as a sweet benediction into my life, as in yours, and many of her artless words will live with me until I die," was Glenn's quick rejoinder. After a few moments' silence he added: "I was told, to-day, that Crates Welldon is in jail."

"I am so sorry! Poor Nancy! How this will grieve her."

"Indeed it will. And, if he is found guilty of the crime for which he was arrested, he will be sent to the penitentiary. It is charged that he stole a handsome rifle from a young man visiting the Masons. Crates was stable boy there."

"But how could a mere boy be sent to the penitentiary? He cannot be over fifteen years of age," was Mabel's hasty response.

"Because the State of Alabama, like some of her sister-States, has not yet awakened to the fact that to send a boy to the penitentiary is the speediest possible way of developing a first-class criminal." Glenn spoke with a vehemence that indicated strong indignation.

"But is there no Reformatory School in our State for such boys?" was Mabel's surprised inquiry.[1]

"Not yet. Two noble women, of high birth and culture, have been trying for several years to get our Legislature to establish one. I believe

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[1] At this date one has just been established at East Lake, Ala.

in the end they will be successful, for God is with them; but in the meantime poor Crates Welldon may have to live so long among hardened criminals, that all possibility of helping him 'be good,' as our wee Lassie put it, has been crushed out of him. How that child's words come to me, to-night! I wonder if I have done all that was possible for Crates? Sometimes I seem to myself to be doing almost nothing, while there is so much, all about me, that needs so sorely to be done."

Glenn's usually buoyant tone was almost despondent.

"If you, who are always doing something for others, feel thus, how do you suppose I must feel?" his sister questioned, with her earnest eyes fixed on his drooping face. "My whole life, thus far, has been wasted, and since I have found him—our wee Lassie's precious Elder Brother—and his love has come into my heart, I have been wondering, day after day, what he would have me do that I may become a blessing to others."

"So then, we are together in the same boat, it seems," Glenn responded, with a fleeting smile. "Thank God that you have really found anchorage in him at last! No doubt our Father has some work all ready for us both, when he gets us into proper shape to use us. While you

are waiting to find yours, don't forget what a joy and blessing you are to every member of the Linwood household. Even the stable boys are better off and happier for your presence at the Hall, especially since our wee Lassie introduced you to her dear Elder Brother."

"I believe you and Mr. Keith introduced me to him, but my eyes were not really opened to behold him until the day wee Lassie went home," was the thought of Mabel's heart as she pressed the shining pin she wore "In His Name," with caressing fingers, and sent up to him a swift message of thanksgiving, and a prayer for guidance.

A few days later Glenn announced his intention of visiting a convict camp situated some distance south of Linwood. Mabel begged hard to accompany him, but this he felt was not advisable.

"There are over four hundred men down there, all convicts, and among them are doubtless many desperate characters. They are leased by a coal company to work in the mines. It is no place for a young lady to visit. I am going for a special purpose: to study the question of boy criminals as seen in this encampment. I am told there are quite a large number in this one stockade under eighteen years of age."

He was absent most of the week. When he returned his face was more grave than his sister had ever before seen it. In reply to her questions, he said:

"It is worse than I had heard. The day I arrived there I was told that two boys—both colored—were dying of fever in the stockade hospital. Both were under fifteen years of age. I was not allowed to see them. I found quite a number under eighteen years, both white and colored, working in the mines, side by side with the most hardened and blasphemous criminals. One boy—a negro—has as fine a face as I ever looked into, in one of his race. He has been there six years. He is now just seventeen years old." [1]

"How dreadful!" was Mabel's exclamation. "Then he was only eleven years old when he was sent to the penitentiary!"

"Yes. And the lady missionary there, Mrs. Hudson—for I am glad to say that a noble woman, with her husband and daughter, are spending their lives among those poor creatures, teaching and trying to lead them to Christ,—this lady told me that Jason, that is the boy's name, is pure gold. He is one of the most attentive members of the night school, and gives every evidence of being a sincere, true Christian."

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[1] This is an actual fact, verified by the missionary in the camp.

"You say the lady missionary has a daughter. Is she a child?"

"No, and when I met her I was sorry I had not granted your request to accompany me. Miss Hudson, I judge, is about two and twenty years of age. She is a perfect lady, is highly educated, and has one of the sweetest faces I ever looked into."

"And yet she is willing to spend her life laboring for the benefit of convicts? How strange," was Mabel's comment.

"You would not think it strange if you knew her. Christ's presence seems such a living reality to her that, like Keith, she only cares to be where he would have her, no matter how dark or uncomfortable the place. And she is sure he wants her in the encampment. Her work is especially among the boys."

"You speak as though you had known her a long time," was Mabel's surprised response.

"And that is exactly the way I feel. One sometimes lives months in a brief space of time, and I seem to have lived years in the few days I was at the stockade. I am sure I shall never again be the same man I was before I visited it. The awfulness of sin, and the need of extending help to those who have fallen under its blighting power, presses on me as never before. Ask the

dear Elder Brother, my sister, to show me exactly what he would have me do."

That night, after Glenn was in the privacy of his own room, he spent a longer time than usual in prayer. Indeed, the entire night was passed in meditation and supplication, with no thought or desire for sleep.

Glenn Hildegarde had, most unexpectedly to himself, come to a crisis in his life. Keith's experience, as told on the afternoon of the bird-hunt, had been brought afresh to his memory by meeting Agnes Hudson at the convict camp.

Something about this radiant-faced, sweetly-grave young lady impressed him, from the first moment of their meeting, with the fact that she had pressed farther out into the spiritual kingdom than he had yet done. A longer acquaintance with her, and a few questions he had delicately asked and which she had frankly and modestly answered, convinced him that this impression was true, and that she had indeed admitted Christ into her heart, and had there crowned him King, with a fulness and with an absolute abandonment to his will, to which he—as yet—was a stranger.

As he continued in prayer and meditation, a question came to him which, for a time, brought him sharp distress.

Would he, if such were God's will, devote his entire life and his means toward rescuing wayward boys from a life of crime and infamy?

Could he do this? He really wanted to help them, but could he give his whole life to this seemingly obscure work? He had formed many plans for aiding his fellow-creatures, but they had all been such as would bring him prominently before the eyes of men, and win their approving voice. But to bend all his energies, and give his fortune, in gathering up reckless and evil-disposed boys, and trying to train them into good citizens and followers of Christ, was something he had never, for a moment, contemplated doing.

But the longer the question pressed itself upon him, the more he realized the need that this work should be done.

At last, toward morning, he humbly consented to assume the responsibility of such an undertaking, if God would show him the way and give him the wisdom required for its successful accomplishment.

As he thus surrendered himself absolutely to the divine will, such a wave of peace flowed over his soul that, before he knew it, he was audibly raising his voice in praise and thanksgiving to God.

Verily, the surrendered life is the only one where the joy and peace Christ promised his disciples, can be fully realized. And yet how many hesitate, and how many others utterly refuse to make the surrender, and thus their lives are barren—no peace for themselves, and no usefulness for others.

CHAPTER XII.

A Lovely Plan.

SOME weeks following the never-to-be-forgotten night mentioned in our last chapter, when wee Lassie's "Elder Brother" so revealed himself to Glenn Hildegarde that heaven seemed to have come down and entered his soul, Mabel remarked, as they sat at luncheon:

"We have not been to visit Nancy for ever so long. Cannot you make time to ride down with me to-morrow?"

"No, but the next day I will be free and can be at your service. By-the-way, did I tell you that Crates was not found guilty, after all? Nancy was able to prove an alibi, and now a young negro is under arrest for the theft Crates was supposed to have committed."

"How thankful I am the boy is not guilty. While his face is undoubtedly a sullen one, wee Lassie's influence over him proves there is a tender spot somewhere in his nature."

"Yes," Glenn assented, "and no doubt Crates will be the first of the boys I shall gather into my 'Home'. If I can only win his heart, I believe

I can make of him a real helper in working with the others, for he has a strong nature."

It will thus be seen that Glenn had communicated his plan to devote his life to the rescue and uplifting of boys with depraved tastes and tendencies, to his sister.

Mabel had, somewhat to his surprise, entered heartily into his thought, and together they had laid many plans for the future development of the project.

He had also written freely to Keith of his new purpose, and in reply had received such a hearty commendation from his friend, together with some practical suggestions as to the opening of the work, as led Glenn to see more fully than ever that his purpose was undoubtedly in accord with the divine will.

Keith's expectation of spending the Christmas holidays at Linwood had miscarried, much to his own discomfiture as well as the disappointment of his friends. He wrote to Glenn:

"But I can secure a few days breathing spell in March, and if this date will suit you and Miss Hildegarde, I shall be happy indeed to be with you. My rooms seem more lonely to me than ever since I was with you at Linwood, and was there permitted to share in your cozy and delightful home-life."

L. of C.

When Glenn read this paragraph aloud to his sister, a dainty flush crept into her cheeks.

"Perhaps he will be here in time for my birthday," was the thought that sent the blood coursing through her veins with quickened life. For in spite of her many womanly attributes Mabel was still somewhat of a child in some particulars, and the desire for a birthday féte of some kind was one of them.

The heart-vision which this fair girl had received of Jesus at Nita's dying couch, had so revolutionized her life that "society" was in a state of ferment over the change. Of course this remark especially refers to the social circle as it existed around Linwood.

But as there were a large number of families of wealth and culture embraced within this radius, the effect of her altered life was farther reaching than one might suppose, some ripples extending even as far as the city of Huntsville.

Her one excuse for declining the many invitations that flooded her to engage in various amusements which had once seemed to her to contain the very essence of life, was the simple answer: "I am now too busy for such things."

When further pressed as to her reasons for withdrawing so largely from the frivolous set in which she had so speedily become a favorite,

she smilingly said: "I have found something more important and satisfying to me than to attend your balls and late suppers. My brother, as some of you know, never approved of my dancing, and your card parties were his special abhorrence. I am now trying to fit myself to become a real companion for him, and a help in the work to which he is preparing to devote his life."

Society around Linwood elevated its eyebrows at this candid confession, and soon placed the brother and sister on its list of "peculiars." The preparations which Glenn was already beginning to make in a quiet way, for building a large Home and opening an Industrial School for the class of boys he designed to reach, also marked him, in the world's estimation, as a "crank."

"My birthday party is to be a lovely affair," Mabel confided to him some weeks after Keith's letter had been read. "I want to invite about fifty persons. Will you promise to help me make it a success?"

"Of course," was her brother's reply, although his heart did not respond as warmly as in former days. His mind was so filled with plans for his Home and School, that this festive occasion almost jarred on him.

"But I am selfish to feel thus," he thought, with a self-reproachful pang, as he glanced into his sister's flushed and beaming countenance. "Of course Mabel needs these enlivening seasons, and I must do my best to make it a delightful occasion." Aloud he said:

"Suppose I engage the stringed band from Glenmore to come up. Your guests will enjoy the music, even though they know dancing is prohibited at Linwood."

"That will be charming," was his sister's response. "And I assure you," she added, with a merry laugh, "the guests will have no thought of dancing."

Her laugh rather puzzled Glenn, as he was well aware that the dance was one of the favorite pastimes among the set of young people that had gathered about Mabel when she first made Linwood her home.

"Doubtless it is because she knows they are so well aware of my opinion that no thought of indulging, when in my home, will cross their minds," was the explanation with which he dismissed the matter from his recollection.

"I do hope Mr. Keith will be here in time for the party," Mabel continued, her cheeks deepening in color. "Could you not tell him about it, and ask him to try and fix the date of his coming so as to fit in with my birthday?"

Glenn looked grave. "But Keith would not enjoy anything of that kind," he said, hesitatingly.

"All the same, I want him to be present," Mabel rejoined. "But you need not write him about it, after all. I can ask God to bring him, and I believe he will, for I am sure our dear Elder Brother is interested in my party, and wants it to be a success."

This remark astonished Glenn, and caused him to scan his sister's face so closely that she broke into a happy laugh and ran to him, laying her cheek against his sleeve as she said: "You dear old Glenn! I had not meant to tell you yet, but I see I must. I am going to have a lovely party for all the poor boys I can hunt up; those that live around the mountain, you know. Crates Welldon, now that he is free, will help me find them, and I am going to have some little simple gift for each boy. A souvenir of the day placed beside each plate. Now don't you think Mr. Keith will enjoy helping them have a good day? And don't you think I can ask God to send him in time to assist me in giving this beautiful party?"

Again she laughed, out of her full, joyous heart, and Glenn stroked her cheek caressingly as he replied: "Indeed I do, for I believe he has

put it into your loving heart to give the poor fellows just the treat this will be. Their lives are so barren this party will be a red-letter day to them."

Well satisfied, Mabel went about her duties, certain that her birthday party was going to be a great success.

When Crates Welldon was approached by her on the subject of aiding her in finding the boys and marshalling them for the occasion, he shyly but heartily promised his assistance.

"Thar's er lot o' 'em," he said, scratching his head reflectively. "I dunno ez thar's fifty on 'em close 'nuff ter git here, but thar's er big crowd. An' I knows ev'y las' one o' 'em. Sum be sich onery fellers, though, yer won't want 'em ter cum, nohow. Jim and Joe Allen air sich low-down sneaks ther own mammy hez ben 'lowin' she'd hev ter git shet o' 'em, somehow. Yer wouldn't want the likes o' them ter cum, now, would yer?"

"Yes, indeed. They are the very ones I will be glad to invite," Mabel hastened to say. "You see, it helps such boys, sometimes, when everybody has been looking down on them and calling them bad names, to show them that you like them well enough to treat them as though you believed they wanted to be gentlemen. And you know,

Crates, there is the making of a gentleman in almost every boy on earth, if only he is gotten hold of in the right way, and properly taught."

Insensibly Crates straightened himself to his full height as he listened to these words. From that hour he was Mabel's staunch friend and ally, and down in his heart was then and there born a desire "ter be er gen'l'man, sho'." Among the qualifications necessary, in his crude mind, to render him one of these exalted beings, the following were chief: That he must be honest; never tell a lie; keep his face and hands scrupulously clean, and his shoes well polished.

"Yes, an' I hes ter be keerful ter keep my ole hat off'n my head when I's talkin' ter Miss Hildegarde, an' wimmin. Nancy hez allus tolt me so, but I never keered nuthin' 'bout mindin' hit afore," he reflected, as he walked down the road which led to their cabin.

Sometimes seed planted in very unpromising soil germinates quickly. Truth and honesty, for the first time in his life, now became to his awakening soul, virtues worth cultivating.

CHAPTER XIII.

An Unexpected Gift.

GREATLY to Mabel's satisfaction, Keith reached Linwood several days before the date for her birthday féte.

Glenn speedily informed him of his sister's plan for a grand festival, and was much interested in the way his friend received the news.

"I am glad I reached you in time to have a hand in the affair," he said, with a laughing glance at Mabel. "I feel so like a boy since I have shaken myself free from my duties, that I shall expect exactly the same treatment you bestow on the other fellows."

While he was in this jocular mood, Mabel confided to him some of the amusing experiences which had come to her while hunting up her expected guests.

In the midst of this recital she espied Nancy Welldon's angular figure approaching.

"There comes one of the most original characters I have ever known," she remarked, drawing Keith's attention to the tall figure which

was still some distance away. "You will be amused by her quaint talk. But we know her well, and she is one of the most unselfish beings on earth. She leads a very lonely life, and we are always glad for her to come to us whenever she feels inclined."

"Is she widow or spinster, that her life is so lonely?" Keith asked, with a careless glance in Nancy's direction.

"She is a widow. Her husband lived only a year after marriage. She is all alone, now, with the exception of a young brother-in-law. He makes his home with her when he is not away at work, but he is so morose and surly toward her as to really give her no companionship."

Then, in a few brief, eloquent sentences, she told of Nita, and of Nancy's care over and devotion to the child. She concluded by saying: "Wee Lassie—this is the name by which Glenn and I have always spoken of her—was a veritable angel of light to Nancy, as well as to us. Since her death the woman seems utterly bereft." By this time Nancy had reached them.

Keith's sympathy had now been fully aroused, and he studied her with that interest which a student of human nature ever evinces for a character out of the usual type.

"The walk from your home to the Hall is a

most beautiful one," Mabel remarked to her, trying to draw her into conversation. "Did you notice the swelling of the buds on the trees as you came along? I have heard the birds singing, lately, telling me that spring has really come, and it gladdens my heart."

"I seed sum o' them thar yarbs ez folks 'lows air good fur ther rumatiz, jist er-'pearin' ter wake up ez I cum 'long, an' I kinder wanted ter git' em, but I couldn't be pestered wi' 'em ter day, nohow. Crates, he hez growin' pains orful bad when hit air er-rainin', an' he 'lows he wants me ter mek him er tea made out'n them rumatick yarbs. I don' b'leeve hit'll help him none, but I wants ter argify him ef I kin," Nancy replied.

Mabel smilingly expressed sympathy for her brother's suffering, while Keith cast about in his mind as to what Nancy meant by the word "argify." He decided she must have intended it for "gratify," and awaited her further remarks with renewed interest.

"Ez ter ther birds, they's that pesterin' when ther berries is er-ripenin' in ther summer, I don' like 'em, nohow. Hit allus sot heaps o' store by 'em 'fore Hit drapped off, an' when I heerd 'em er-woblin' an' er-woblin' ez I cum er-long, hit

med me feel more lonesome-like and widderless than ever."

Mabel flashed a demure glance at Keith, and Glenn, who had just returned from a visit to another part of the grounds, said, with a cheery smile: "I am sorry you did not bring Crates along, Nancy, to carry back some things for you. Now I will have to fix just a few parcels in a light basket. Next time when you come, be sure and bring him, if he is at home."

"I axed him ter cum, but Crates air pow'ful ill when he choose ter be. He said he hed no min' ter tote no mo' things fur me," and Nancy sighed. "I preached him er long sermint, but hit didn' fotch him round none, ter tell on. I telled him hit ware monstrous kind in you-alls ter help sich pore, widderless creeters ez we-uns be, but he 'lowed he'd got thet worrited er hearin' 'bout sich things, he mos' wanted ter hang hisse'f. So, in cose, I had ter let him er-lone. Crates air plumb sot in his way when he gits one o' his ill spells on ter him."

"What seems to be the nature of his illness?" Keith inquired, amusement and curiosity struggling for mastery in his face.

Nancy stared at him thoughtfully for a moment before she replied: "W'y, don' ye know? He's jis ill, that's all. He's allus ben so. He

ware ther illest young-un yer ever seed. Allus er bawlin', an' er whinin', and er quarl'n. He's ill by natur. Jis' ill. So thar's nuthin' mo' ter 'splain."

Keith turned quickly away, lest the woman's feelings should be hurt by the broad smile he could not repress.

Mabel flashed a reproachful glance after him and said, sweetly: "Perhaps your brother's temper will improve as he grows older. I hope so. Don't you think—" but a strange sound coming from the depths of a basket Nancy carried in her hand so startled her that she did not complete her sentence.

"Don' yer be skeered, honey dear," Nancy said to her, lifting the cover cautiously from her basket and disclosing to Mabel's surprised gaze the tiniest black mite of a pig her eyes had ever rested upon.

"I's done brung hit fur yer birthday present," the woman said, triumphantly. "Hit ware ther runt o' ther litter, an' no 'count. Crates, he 'lowed ter let hit starve, but I knowed hit 'ud mek er nice pet fur ye. So I hev done scrubbed hit, and tied er yaller ribbin 'round hit's neck, an' yere hit air, ez peart ez er cricket an' ez hongery ez er settin' hen. Hit's jis' waked up from er nap."

Mabel's dismay was so great that she could find no word of thanks for this strange gift. Glenn came to her rescue.

"It was kind in you, Nancy, to think of my sister and wish to give her a present for her birthday. I will have a nice little pen made for it, and we will see that it is fed and well taken care of. No doubt it will grow into a fine shoat, after awhile."

"W'ot yer want ter mek hit er pen fur?" Nancy asked. "Hit air fur er pet, an' hit's done scrubbed ez clean ez soft soap an' warm water an' er scrubbin' brush kin git hit. See how white hit's skin air," and, unmindful of the pig's piercing squeals, she lifted him with one hand out of the basket, and with the other parted the black hair along its spine, revealing skin of milky whiteness.

"It's just the thing," Keith now said, coming to Mabel's side. "You can tie a little bell around its neck on that yellow ribbon, and with the tinkling of the bell and the little fellow's squeals and grunts, he will add greatly to the music and the fun of the birthday festival."

Nancy looked at him complacently, scanning him interestedly from head to foot as she said: "Thet's ther idee. Yer got right smart o' sense, ef ye air one o' them pesky lawye'-men w'ot ther

Lord called hypercrates an' spreadin' adders. I dunno why he called yer sich bad names ez them snakes be, 'nless t'wer 'cos yer spreads yer-se'ves out so big-like, 'z if yer owned ther hull yarth."

"What makes you think he is a lawyer, Nancy," Glenn asked, his eyes dancing with merriment.

"'Cos' his eyes mos' done bored holes through me, a-ready," she replied, with emphasis. "He h'ain't never tuk 'em off'n me sence I cumed, 'cept when he went off ter larf. I hev seed lawye-men afore, an' I knows 'em. I likes 'em purty well, too, 'ceptin' I 'members w'ot ther good Book calls 'em. Be he er beau o' yown, Miss Mabel?"

"He is an old friend of mine, Nancy, and the best fellow living, even if his eyes are rather keen," Glenn hastened to say, and Mabel, to hide her confusion, bent low over the squirming, squealing pig which Nancy had placed in her lap.

"Yer'll hev ter warm hits milk fur hit, fur er right smart spell, yit," the woman said, again turning her attention to the little animal. "Hit's hongery now, thet's why hit talks so loud."

"Perhaps he is sleepy," Keith said, seeing

Mabel's look of dismay and embarrassment over her new possession. "Let me have him."

He took him and laughingly slipped him down into his coat pocket. The pig gave a few satisfied grunts and then was silent.

Nancy eyed Keith admiringly.

"She'll find yer handy ter hev erbout," she said, nodding toward Mabel. "Be ye goin' ter be jined soon?"

CHAPTER XIV.

Nancy's New Possession.

SURE enough, as he had suggested to Nancy, Keith procured a tiny bell and fastened it to the orange ribbon with which the woman had decorated the pig, whose possession made Mabel so uncomfortable.

It was amusing to watch the little beast's behavior when thus adorned. Surprise, at first, caused him to stop perfectly still, seemingly to listen for a continuation of the strange sound which had greeted his ears as he started to trot down the walk, after Keith had turned him free, with his new ornament swinging from his neck. The silence reassured him, and again he proceeded on his way. The lively jingling of the bell this time frightened him. He suddenly stopped, and then began to back toward the door, in which was grouped the amused household. Still the bell tinkled at his every movement. Soon the black mite made a dash for the open gate. Keith reached it first and closed it, fearing the pig might get out on the highway and be lost.

The little animal's antics were so amusing that Glenn laughed until the tears came.

At this moment the well-known voice of Nancy herself greeted their ears, addressing Mabel, who was standing on the piazza steps.

"Jis' look yere, honey dear. Hit's wuth er nickel jis' ter peep at him. I 'lows yer'll give me thet much ter help me 'long, bein' ez ther good Lord hez done tuk pity onter my widderless condition, an' hez sont me er chile."

Much surprised at her words, Glenn and Keith joined Mabel, and watched Nancy as she carefully unrolled a bundle she carried in her arms. The face of a sleeping infant met their gaze.

"Thar! Hit's er plumb beauty, now, hain't hit?" she asked, in triumph.

"But where did you get it, Nancy?" Mabel inquired in astonishment. "Whose child is it?"

"Hit air *mine,*" the woman replied, in a tone of deep satisfaction. "Did'n I tell yer ther Lord had done sont hit ter me ter comfort me in my widderless sorrer?"

"Tell us all about it," Glenn said, persuasively, knowing that some story must lie back of her words.

"Let me set down er spell, an' git my wind, an' I 'lows ter," she answered, seating herself in a low rocker that stood in the hallway. Then she began: "Pinkie Passnups, ole man Pass-

nups' darter, wuz ther purtiest gal in Long Cove. Ther fellers wuz jis' wild 'bout her. Wal, ther old man did'n hev no min' ter 'low Pinkie ter run wi' 'em. She ware on'y seventeen, but law, she ware er plumb woman. He mought better hev gin her er loose rein, 'cause Steve Slade wanted ter marry her bad, an' she liked Steve fus' rate. No use goin' 'gin natur'. But ole man Passnups sed Pinkie shouldn' never marry nobody; she hed ter stay home 'long wi' him and tend ter things, 'cause her maw ware dead, an' ther ware three leetle 'uns 'sides her daddy, ter look arter.

"But folks hain't smarter nur wiser then God. He done fixed all thet up jis' ez he wanted hit ter stay when he tuk Eve out'n one o' Adam's ribs, and then jined 'em tergether hisse'f in ther holy bands o' maturmony. Somehow, gals pears ter feel lost-like, 'tell they gits back ez close ter whar ther Lord tuk thet rib out'n ther fust man's side, ez love can fotch 'em. Yer knows yerse'f that's ther truth, now don' yer, honey dear?"

Nancy paused and fixed her eyes solemnly on Mabel's face. A wave of color dyed the girl's cheeks as she answered: "It is natural for most girls to fall in love. I suppose that is what you mean."

"Sartinly. Wal, Pinkie wuz like ther rest on

'em, on'y her daddy wuz sot in his way, an' he telled Steve Slade ter go 'bout his bis'ness and leave his gal er-'lone. This kinder riled Steve, an' he went down ter Miss'ippi ter see some o' his kin. Pinkie, she worked herse'f up inter quite er rage 'cause Steve didn't hev sperrit er-nuff ter brazen out her daddy an' marry her anyway. So, when er likely-lookin' feller what called hisse'f Joshaway Hightower, frum Georgy, begun ter foller her er'bout, she jis' tuk up wi him at wunct. An ther long and ther short o' ther story be, she married him, an' when Steve come back, ready ter spunk up ter ole Passnups an' take Pinkie any way, Pinkie ware gone. Hit mos' kilt him. He didn' stay long, but went back ter Miss'ippi."

Nancy paused in her story, for the child on her lap had aroused from sleep. She trotted and patted him vigorously, and as he again fell into peaceful slumber, she continued, addressing her words to Mabel:

"Two months ergo pore Pinkie come back. Thet Hightower feller hed done left her, arter treaten' her jis' orful. Pity sich fellers couldn' be put in er chain-gang an' kep thar. She brung this yere boy chile wi' her. Hit ware on'y three weeks old. Her daddy wanted ter turn her an' hit out'n his house when he come home frum

ther fiel', one day, an' found 'em thar. But Pinkie ware too sick ter git out'n ther bed, so he hed ter let her stay.

"She died yest'dy. She sont fur me, an' hit ware 'nuff ter mek er stone shed tears, a'most, ter a-hearn her beg o' me ter tek her babby an' raise hit like hit ware my own. Ole Passnups, he done cussed hit, an' 'lowed hit shouldn' never stay under his roof. So, honey dear, hit air mine. Don' ye 'gratulate me? I kin work now, fur I'll hev summit ter work fur, an' ter love. I shan't feel lonesome-like an' widderless no mo'. Ther Lord air good ter sich ez trusts him, ther good Book 'lows, an' he sho' air good ter me ter hev gin me this pore fatherless an' motherless orphin fur ter raise fur him."

Nancy's eyes were moist as she finished speaking, and Mabel felt a mist gathering into her own as she gently said: "I am glad God has placed the child with you. He will be a comfort to you. Glenn and I will help provide for him."

"That we will," was Glenn's quick response, as he slipped a silver dollar into the woman's hand. Keith added another.

She thanked them heartily, and said, as she rose to leave: "Hit's gitten' inter ther shank o' ther evenin', an' I mus' be er-goin'. I dunno what Crates air goin' ter say 'bout my 'doptin'

ther leetle feller. He may be tuk wi' one o' his ill spells when he knows 'bout hit. But law sakes! I kin bar hit now, wi' this leetle face er peekin' up inter mine, er asken fur love ez plain ez plain kin be."

Mabel followed her to the door, saying again: "I am sure the child will be a comfort to you."

"Er comfort, honey dear? Hit's er blessin' ez desarves er bigger soundin' name then thet air be. Hit's mos' like gitten inter heaven ter feel him er-snuglin' up inter my buzzam."

Then she paused, ran her eyes over the spacious building she was leaving, and solemnly added: "If this yere house—filled chuck full o' gold an' jewels—ware sot right on top o' my head, er free gift frum God, I couldn' feel no mo' happier then I duz this blessed minnit."[1]

With these words she walked away, leaving her three friends convulsed with laughter, and yet with a mistiness in their eyes that showed how her quaint words had reached a tender chord in their sympathetic hearts.

"She is pure gold," Keith remarked, as he watched her going down the walk.

"Indeed she is. One among a thousand. But is not her mode of expressing herself amusing?

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[1] This, with many other remarks and incidents of Nancy's, are actual facts.

Did I ever tell you," and Mabel turned with laughing eyes toward her brother, "how she invited us down last season to see her 'crazy-anthems,' while they were in bloom? I don't remember that I ever thought to repeat this invitation to you."

"No, you never did. That is rich," and Glenn laughed.

"Crazy anthems!" Keith slowly repeated with a puzzled expression. "Oh! I see," he added, with quick merriment. "Chrysanthemums, of course."

As the laughter died away Mabel said: "Her unselfish spirit shames me whenever I am with her. With all her oddities, Nancy Welldon is a real heroine."

"One of our Father's chosen ones, no doubt," Keith responded, as he stooped to give the pig a passing pat of approval. The black mite, while in his infancy and to please Nancy, was given the range of the grounds, Glenn having decided that as soon as his swinish nature began to manifest itself, he was to be relegated to a pen.

He had now settled down into quiet behavior, evidently having discovered that the bell, though noisy, was harmless.

CHAPTER XV.

A Red-Letter Day.

MABEL'S birthday dawned as fair and balmy as one could desire.

Crates appeared at a much earlier hour than was expected, bringing with him his first relay of boys. He seated them on the steps of the wide piazza with much the precision with which a military officer manœuvres his troops. Then he sought Mabel, who, in her busy preparation for the day's festivities, had not noticed his approach.

"Them fellers cumed ter our place mos' 'fore sun-up," he began, with a fling of his thumb toward the forms seated stiffly on the steps. "I mos' b'leeve they wuz mean 'nuff ter want yer ter give 'em ther brek'fus, ez well ez ther dinner." His tone and expression both evinced extreme disgust. "But," he added, with swift elation, "I's done settled 'em."

"And how did you settle them?" Glenn inquired. He had just discovered Crates' presence, and had quickly joined his sister. He and Keith had offered to keep the guests interested

and entertained until the feast was ready to be served, but neither of them had anticipated entering the field at so early an hour. Even the band from Glenmore had not yet put in an appearance.

"I jis' tolt 'em that er gen'l'man don't never eat no grub nohow—nuthin' wuth noticin'—when he gits er invite out ter visit. An' they's looked ez 'shamed an' ez tuk down sence I tolt 'em that ez er ole sheep looks what's done been sheared."

Crates chuckled over this piece of diplomacy, and Mabel hastened to say: "But I expect you all to eat a hearty dinner to-day. And I shall be disappointed if you do not."

The boy's eyes sparkled as he heard these words, but he quickly replied: "Yer don' know some o' them fellers ez I duz. They could eat er plumb bushel o' sich fine stuff ez yer's goin' ter give us ter-day."

Mabel and Glenn laughed, and soon Keith joined them, and the three proceeded to make their guests feel at home. Crates soon excused himself by saying: "I'se got ter go back, now, arter ther other crowd. Jim an' Joe Allen's 'mong 'em, an' I'se got ter keep my eye on them two fellers all day. They's plumb bad 'uns, they air," and he walked away, standing as

straight as his slouching shoulders could be drawn.

Evidently he felt the importance of his position, and had no mind to abate one jot of it.

Glenn and Keith were not long in discovering that they had their hands full. Mabel, as soon as she could, slipped away to aid in preparing the table, for she wanted to have the dinner served early, feeling sure, from Crates' words, that each boy had brought with him an appetite that clamored for speedy satisfaction.

The second relay of guests was much larger than the first, and among them Mabel soon singled out the two Allen boys, of whom Crates had spoken so disparagingly. They were bright looking fellows, especially the younger, who did not seem to be over eight years of age. The older one was about fourteen.

It took all the tact and ingenuity Glenn could command to win the phalanx of boys, to whom he devoted his attention, from their stiff bearing and rustic reticence. He brought the pet pig to his aid, but with small success, the boys being disposed to snub him as an interloper. Keith, who had enjoyed long experience among the newsboys of the city, was more successful, and soon had the squads under his care interested and happy. The band arrived, at last, and the

music greatly added to the pleasure, as well as to the talkativeness of the youthful guests.

Just before the dinner hour, and when considerable freedom of speech and manner had become manifest among them, Keith noticed one or two of the older among the boys, ejecting tobacco juice over the walks. Tactfully he said: "Boys, if Miss Hildegarde, who has invited you here to-day to give you a happy time, should place a plate containing poison before you when she summons you to dinner, and beside it dishes filled with appetizing food, which would you prefer, and from which would you eat?"

"From ther good dishes?"

"From ther plates o' meat."

"I'd take ther good vittles, you bet."

"From ther platter o' pot-pie, ev'ry time," came a chorus of ready answers.

Keith quickly pointed his question to their use of tobacco, and gave them a brief but telling outline of the injury the poisonous weed was stealthily but surely inflicting on their bodies, souls and spirits.

All listened attentively, for Keith had a magnetic power about him which always held the attention of those whom he addressed.

At the close of his remarks a small boy—it proved to be little Joe Allen—who had been

sitting quietly on the steps, stood up quickly, and with his bright eyes fixed earnestly on Keith, and the spirit of controversial debate written all over his face, said: "But Mister, I knows er feller what had fits—orful bad 'uns—an' ther doctor tolt his mammy ter give him terbaccer, an' now he's done got well."

A quick burst of laughter greeted these words, for the crowd saw that little Joe, who, to use their own language was "nuthin' but er kid, hed got ther inside track an' throwed ther fine gent clean ter one side."

Keith himself could not repress a smile, but he swiftly answered: "Well, Joe, you just wait until you have fits before you touch the poisonous stuff."

Joe, who had again seated himself on the steps as soon as he had delivered his protest, was on his feet like a flash, with the earnestly spoken words: "Wal, then, I'se done had ther nightmar' twict, a'ready, an' twer pow'ful bad ther las' time, an' skeered mammy mos' ter death." [1]

Regular guffaws of laughter greeted this outburst of confidence, and Glenn remarked, in a low tone, in Keith's ear: "You see he thinks he is almost ready for the fits. Poor little chap!

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[1] This, like so many other incidents in this narrative, is strictly true.

He would take them with pleasure, I fancy, in order to get the tobacco."

Dinner was now announced, and it was interesting to observe the bright, expectant faces of the guests as they gathered awkwardly about the bountifully spread tables.

They needed no urging to induce them to eat, and even Crates seemed to have forgotten his words as to "er gen'l'man eatin' nuthin' wuth noticin'," for the way the food disappeared from his well-filled plate, was gratifying to his hostess to observe.

Great was the delight of the boys over the pretty and appropriate gift which, as a memento of the occasion, Mabel saw was placed beside each plate as the dessert was served. Crates, at this juncture, and just as they were about to withdraw from the table, having been privately interviewed and coached beforehand by Keith, stiffly arose to his feet, and making an awkward, but elaborate bow toward Mabel, said:

"We-uns, Mum, shell reck-lect this yere happy 'casion ez long ez we lives, an' we all 'lows we hopes you-uns shell hev many other 'casions like hit."

His face was very red as he ended his little address, and although the speech had undergone some rather startling and wholly amusing

changes from the few words of appreciation his Mentor had suggested to him, both his hostess and Glenn were greatly pleased by his effort.

The boys had scarcely reached the yard before they broke into vociferous laughter, mingled with subdued cheers, and such remarks as:

"Three cheers fur Crates!"

"Ain' he er roaster?"

"Whar'd ye git that speech, Crates?"

And Jim Allen, with a merry twinkle in his eye, said: "'Spec' Crates duz want more 'casions like this yere day. But t'wasn't jis' ther right thing, ter my thinking, fur er gen'l'man ter do ter ax ther Missus ter give 'em ter him."

Crates, who was close by and still very red in the face, bristled up at once.

"W'at yer talkin' 'bout, Jim Allen? I didn' ax fur nuthin' o' ther kind. I jis' wisht Miss Mabel mought hev lots o' other happy days, jis' like this yere one hez been ter her. She desarves 'em, sho', fur she's ther purtiest an' ther best woman on top o' this mount'in."

"Yer'd better a-sed, on top o' ther hull world," Jim corrected, greatly enjoying his opportunity for "takin' Crates down er peg," as he afterwards expressed himself to little Joe.

Keith now appeared in their midst, and Crates received Jim's parting thrust in silence.

During the afternoon Glenn, who happened to be standing next to Crates while some of the boys were playing a game of ball, remarked to him: "I have often wondered what your full name could be. I have never before known any one who was called Crates."

"Hain't yer? Why, I'se named arter that ole feller w'at tuk pizen—So—crates. Crates air jis' fur short, yer know. I reckon ez how his fambly called him that-er-way, too. Don' ye 'now?"

Sudden mirth almost over-powered Glenn's sense of politeness. To hear the grand old philosopher's name pronounced with only two syllables was bad enough, but to have this followed by the appalling suggestion that his friends were in the habit of addressing him as "Crates" bordered on sacrilege.

"I'd like ter know what he wanted ter take pizen fur. I'se often studdied 'bout hit. Folks must hev sot heaps o' store by him, 'cause Nancy 'lows mam done tolt her he writ books. An' all sich air plumb big folks, now hain't ther?" and the boy looked earnestly into his host's smiling face.

Before an answer could be given the game demanded Crates' undivided attention, so Glenn was spared an explanation.

The happiest day must come to an end, and Mabel's birthday féte was no exception. Supper was served on the lawn in the form of generous sandwiches, slices of cake and luscious fruit, flanked by candy of various kinds. This last was daintily arranged in tarleton bags of delicate shade, and each boy received one as his individual property.

After the meal was over, and just before the guests arose to take their leave, Keith, at Mabel's request, in simple words returned thanks to God for the happy day, and invoked his loving care and protection over each boy, asking that every one of them might grow into a noble, Christ-like man.

Keith would have been greatly surprised could he have overheard some of the remarks made about him as the boys trudged homeward.

"I didn' know he ware er parson," Jim Allen said, with chagrin in face and tone. "I would'n er axed him ter a-kep 'tally fur us, ef I hed er knowed hit. He ware so nice an' jolly-like I 'lowed he ware one o' them travellin' fellers w'ot they calls 'drums.' "

"Shucks! He air no mo' er parson then I be," was Crates Welldon's quick response. "W'ot meks yer think he air one?"

"'Cause he prayed. I never heered any feller pray like that 'cept er parson."

"Parsons don' pray like him. He jis' talked ter God. I mos' thought, one spell, I mought hev seed ther Awmighty, Hisse'f, er standin' clost up ter him, ef I hed er dared ter open my eyes."

"Thet's so. I hed ther same feelin'," Jake Ridley declared. Jake was one of the older among the guests, and the boys rather looked up to him.

"Wal, I'se done chawed my las' chaw o' terbaccer," Crates announced, as he felt about in his pockets to see if there were any remaining bits left. Evidently he had used up the last fragment he possessed, and well satisfied he continued: "Miss Mabel done tolt me, jis' 'fore supper, how folks dies, sometimes, wi' orful cancer-sores kotched from usin' terbaccer. She hed er own uncle w'ot died from one. An' I 'low I ain' goin' ter resk kotchin' nary sore like er cancer-sore be."

"They's pow'ful bad, sho! I seed ole man Jinkinses jis' 'fore he died. His ware on ther topside o' his throat. I never heered he kotched hit from chawin' terbaccer; but he sho' chawed hit; jis' et hit, ez yer mought say," was little Joe Allen's remark.

"I's not skeered ter use terbaccer; but what thet feller they calls Keith sed 'bout hit er bein' dirty-like, an' 'bout our wantin' ter be clean on ther inside ez well ez on ther outside, sticks fas' ter me. I never thought 'bout hit bein' sich plumb onery stuff afore," Jake Ridley said, in a meditative tone. Then he added: "But I don' b'leeve I kin give hit up. I's done chawed an' smoked hit sence I ware so high," and he indicated the height of a very small child by the motion of his hand.

"That's jis' my fix," Jim Allen declared. "Mam— she jis' nach'ly hates terbaccer, an' she done 'lowed she'd give me er silver dollar ef I'd jis' quit off an' git shet o' hit. P'raps I'll s'prise her, yit, by takin' her up on hit. A dollar will buy lots o' things er feller likes."

Thus they talked as they wended their way homeward at the close of what was the most bright, and beautiful, and enjoyable day that had ever come into their barren lives. And how their parents, and other members of the different families, were entertained that evening by a recital of the incidents of the day, and by a full description of the elaborate dinner and generous luncheon that had been provided for them, and also by the exhibition of the handsome present given them.

And later, when they retired to their hard beds, it was only to live over again the beautiful day in the dreams of the night.

Only he who knows and reads the hearts of boys, as well as those of older growth, can tell what hidden fountains in their crude natures had been opened, that day, through contact with lives made fragrant for good by daily walk and converse with wee Lassie's gracious Elder Brother.

CHAPTER XVI.

A Charmed Life.

KEITH lingered at the Hall longer than he had planned to remain when he came. Something about the place and its inmates held for him a charm he had never before felt.

"My visits to Linwood spoil me," he remarked the last evening of his stay. He was speaking to Glenn, but his gaze rested on Mabel. Her glance of inquiry caused him to continue: "The air of this home is so perfect; it so fulfils my thought of what a home should be that my lonely, cheerless apartments seem more dreary to me than ever, after I have been with you."

"Then why not come to us more frequently?" Glenn asked, heartily.

"Perhaps I may, if business permits, and your invitation continues to stand."

His eyes were still studying Mabel's mobile countenance, although he was not conscious of this fact until her deepening color reminded him of his rudeness.

"Forgive me," he said, in a low tone. "You bring to memory a face I once saw on canvass

in Florence." Then he turned to Glenn, remarking: "I suppose your Home and School will be opened in October."

"Yes, if the work goes on as it now promises. The buildings will be ready; but—will I?"

He smiled at Keith's quick glance of surprise, and continued: "I mean that I am still all at sea about teachers. I have the right man, I am sure, for the head of the industrial department, and two more in sight; but others are needed, and I cannot, as yet, seem to find the ones I want."

"Perhaps I can assist you. I will bear it on my heart, and if I think of any one that will suit, I will write you."

The conversation gradually turned toward less personal topics until Glenn, going to a small case where he kept a few of his choice books, brought out a small volume, saying: "Here is a gem from Phillips Brooks on 'Fellowship with Christ.' I came across it yesterday, and it so stirred my heart that I want to pass it on to you and Mabel."

Both expressed pleasure in hearing anything from the pen of this gifted speaker and writer, and Glenn began:

"Let us try to understand how the soul finds refuge in communion with God. Of all the deep

phrases in the Bible, where can we find one deeper or more beautiful than this of David's, 'Thou wilt keep him in the secret of thy presence.'

"The very words are full of peace, before we hardly touch them to open their hidden thought. But their meaning is deeper the more we study it. They mean that when a man is spiritually conscious of the presence of God it secludes and separates him from every other presence. Can we understand that?

"You go into a room full of people, and the tumult of tongues is all about you. You are bewildered and distracted. In the ordinary language of society, which sometimes hits the truth of its own condition rightly, you 'feel lost.' You lose yourself in the presence of so many people. They all seem to take hold of you and claim some part of you, whether they speak to you or not. You are lost in the crowd.

"But by-and-by you meet your best friend there; somebody whose life is your life; somebody you sincerely love and trust; somebody who thoroughly satisfies you, and, by contact of his nature, makes your taste and brain and heart and conscience work at their best. As you draw near to him it seems as if you draw away from all other people. As he takes hold of you

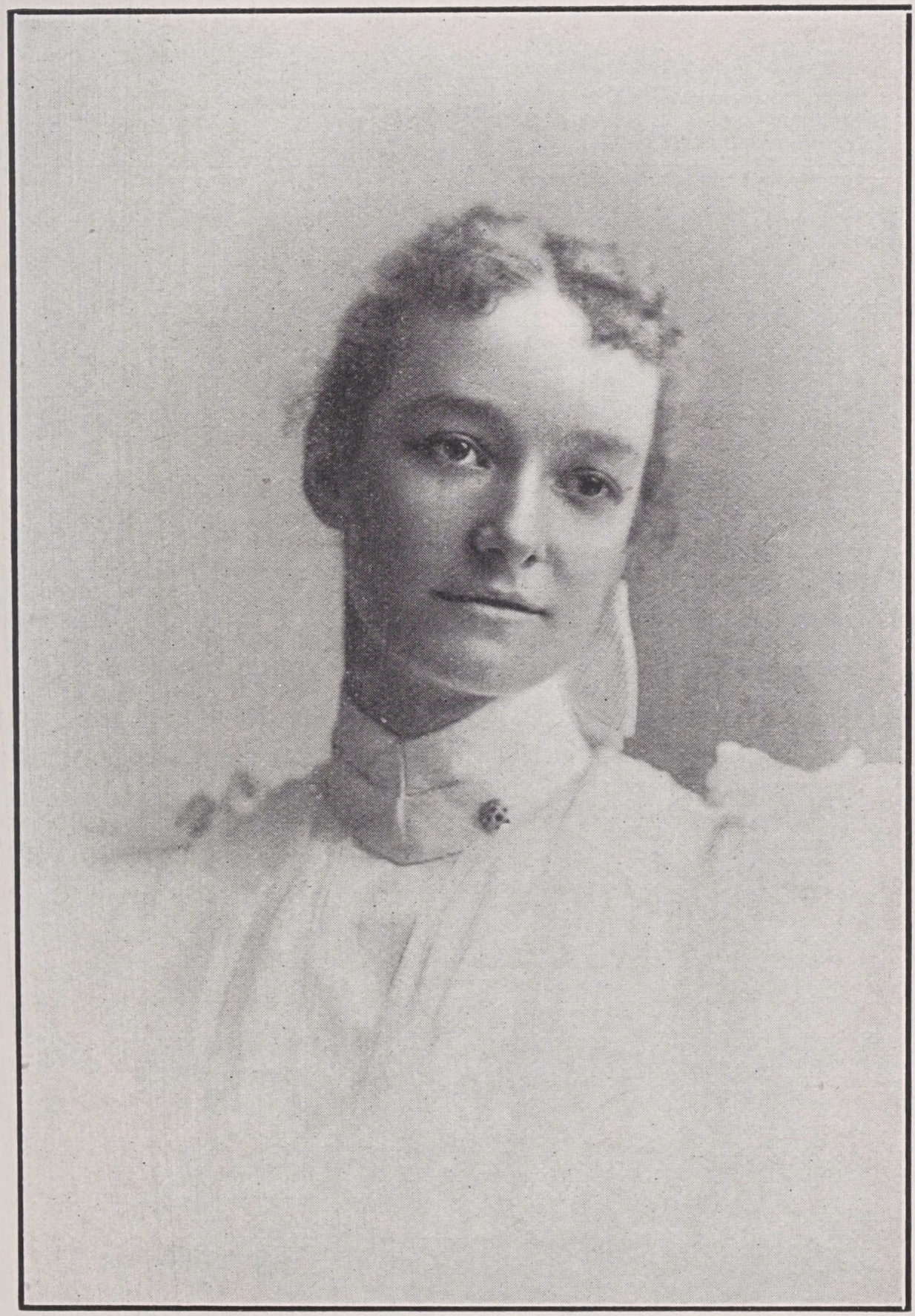
he seems to claim you, and they let you go. The worry and vexation of the crowd sink away as he begins to talk to you, and you understand one another.

"By-and-by you have forgotten that all those other men are talking around you. You have escaped from the strife of tongues. You are absorbed in him. He has hid you in the secret of his presence.

"And now, if it is possible, instead of your best friend, for God himself to be with you so that his presence is real; so that he lets you understand his thoughts and lets you know that he understands yours so that there is true sympathy between you and him; if mere vision and hearing are not necessary to the divine company, and if he comes as close to you—nay, infinitely closer than the men who crowd you around and whose voices are in your ears—then the unseen God is truly with you. What, then, must follow?

"Can any tumult of those men distress you? Can their unfairness anger you? You hear them blaming you; you hear them praising you. Does either work a tumult in your soul? They ask you flippant questions; they give you flippant advice. Does either distress you?

"You are with them, and yet you are alone



"Something about this radiant-faced, sweetly grave young lady, impressed him."

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with him. They parade their foolish vanities before you, and you hardly see them. It is as if a bright fly fluttered its impertinent finery between you and the west when you were looking at a gorgeous sunset. He has blinded you to all but himself. He has hid you in the secret of his presence from the pride of men."

Glenn paused and raised a face, beaming with emotion, to his hearers. He met an answering emotion in theirs, and Keith remarked: "Why does it take us so long thus to know him? Thus to be hidden away in his presence, where nothing can disturb the sweet peace such fellowship brings?"

"Because, for so long a time after we find him, our hearts are divided. Our 'eye is not single,' hence our light is full of shadows," was Glenn's quick reply.

"Yes, and we do not enough cultivate a sense of his presence. We do not seek for him down in the depths of our own being, but as One far away in heaven. When I once began to turn my gaze inward, expecting to find him—awake and smiling and full of love and sympathy—in my own soul, it was not long until he began to manifest himself to my consciousness."

As he thus spoke Keith bent his eyes on Mabel's uplifted countenance. She smiled as

she said in a low voice: "I am thankful I can understand a little of what you are saying, and also something of those wonderful words of Phillips Brooks. The booklet you gave me—'The Charmed Life'—taught me to look for Christ as being ever present with me." She hesitated a moment and then added, with a glance toward her brother: "Would you mind reading a few paragraphs aloud from my little volume? The style is very simple, but it follows the line of what you have already been reading?"

"I shall be delighted to do so. How is it that you have not before placed it in my hands?" was Glenn's ready answer.

"I did not fancy you needed it. But to-night it will fit in so nicely that I think we may all enjoy it."

So saying she arose and left the room, soon returning with a dainty booklet which she gave to her brother, opened at a certain page.

"This is a promising caption," he remarked, with a smile. Then he read aloud:

"How Can I be Always Joyful and Happy?

"In Thy presence is fullness of joy. At Thy right hand there are pleasures forevermore."—Ps. xvi. 11.

"By keeping in the presence of Jesus. Our text says in his presence is fulness of joy. If

you have fulness of joy you have all that you can hold. If you have it forevermore, you have it as long as you live here and in heaven. Joy is deeper than happiness. According to the meaning of the words, happiness depends much upon what happens to us; but joy does not depend upon circumstances. In one sense we can never be perfectly happy while in this world, for the sight of sin all around will make us sad; yet even here we can have joy. Joy is more than peace or rest, for it is active.

"Fulness of joy is for those who are in Jesus' presence. Nowhere else is full joy to be found. Many do not have fulness of joy, even for a part of the time, for they are with Jesus so little. It should be far easier and pleasanter to be with him all the time, than it is to be with him a part of the time. He is with us always, but we are apt to forget his presence. We become filled with our own thoughts, and with interest in things about us, rather than with him."

"How true that is," Glenn remarked, in a meditative tone, as he paused in the reading. "And this absorption in other things, to the forgetfulness of him, will very soon lead into actual sin. And conscious sin brings condemnation, and this will always create a thick veil between the soul and Christ. How carefully we should

cultivate a sense of his presence, for this will cause us to be especially watchful lest we do anything that will veil his blessed face from the gaze of faith."

"One of the sweetest facts connected with the 'charmed life,' about which the little booklet from which you are reading treats," Keith hastened to say, "is this: When one has so fully surrendered his life into God's keeping that he begins to realize that Jesus does really abide in the inmost depths of his soul, through the power of the Holy Comforter, he soon learns the secret of getting any veil that his unbelief or thoughtlessness toward Christ has brought between himself and his Lord, absolutely out of the way."

Keith's eyes were fixed on Mabel. It was because he had seen a shadow cross her face at her brother's words that had caused him to speak so promptly.

"You mean—?" she asked doubtfully, and paused.

"I mean just this. He learns that, so soon as he discovers the veil, he swiftly repents in a moment, of his infidelity. He also claims the cleansing blood; believes in its power to wash away his defilement, and is restored to sweet fellowship, all in the space of a few seconds.

There is no long period of mourning. No lengthy confession and self-accusation and condemnation. He knows his Beloved—the One whom his soul adores—is waiting down in his soul, to blot out the infidelity, or even the sin—if it has gone thus far—as swiftly and as absolutely as though it had never existed. And not only so, but that Jesus is longing, out of the fulness of his great heart of love, again to manifest himself in his beauty to the eye of faith that is yearning to behold him."

"How I thank you for those words," Mabel exclaimed, with a sigh of relief. "I have felt that I must repent a long time in order to be restored, for I so soon forget to watch for his presence when things and persons I greatly enjoy are about me. Now I see what you mean, and that it need not take me such a weary time to get back into his presence."

"And the habit of watching for his smile, even under circumstances that now draw away your attention, will grow on you as you faithfully seek to reach the climax of joy—that of ever abiding in his presence," Keith said, charmed to note the radiant light in the fair girl's countenance. "And now suppose we hear the balance of what your book has to say."

"All right," and Glenn continued to read:

"We should remember that though Jesus always sees and hears us, yet we may not be really with him. We may sit close by the side of another, and yet be far from that person, because our thoughts and feelings are not the same. We are truly in the presence of another only when we are one in spirit, feeling and action. As you love Jesus, you think about things together with him, and act with loving thoughts of him; so it is that you live in his presence.

"If, then, you want your joy to be full, be ever in the presence of Jesus; learn to think his thoughts, to love as he loves. You will then be truly living the charmed life. You will be in heaven while your body is in this world.

"It is not possible to be with any one else in the way we can be with Jesus. We cannot find words to tell persons just how we feel; Jesus understands. Others cannot feel our feelings; Jesus can. They cannot be with us always; he was with us when it happened. He knows all about it, and he will be with us, too, through any trouble that comes out of it. They are not all-wise to direct us, all-loving to soothe us; he is."

"Those are certainly helpful thoughts," Glenn said, as he laid the little volume aside. "Some

time when I have leisure, I shall be glad to read it through."

"I have found it very precious," Mabel responded, as she raised her hand to her throat and pressed her fingers caressingly against her silver pin. The movement was an involuntary one, of which she was not conscious. She soon added: "The reading and the conversation of this evening have given me a wonderful uplift in the spiritual realm. As Nancy once expressed herself to me when I was driving her through Huntsville in the phæton, 'I feels plumb histed up—mos' zif I ware a settin' on top o' yon church-house steeple.' "

The gentle laughter which the last words provoked ended by Glenn remarking: "I, too, have received a fresh touch from the divine hand. Wee Lassie's Elder Brother has been one in our midst to-night, in a very full sense."

"I like the title your little Lassie gave him—that of Elder Brother—exceedingly," Keith remarked. His eyes were shining with a softer lustre than usual, and his face glowed with happiness.

"Yes, it forms such a simple and tangible home-tie between our hearts and his, that we are enabled to realize in a new sense the oneness he means to exist between himself and his peo-

ple. And wee Lasie, I believe, realized his presence with a fulness of which we did not dream until the very last," was Glenn's response.

That evening lingered long in the memory of the three friends, and bound their hearts more closely together in the Divine One about whom they had read and conversed, than ever before.

There are moments when the heart seems so receptive and responsive to the divine life that heaven really appears to open and flood—for a season—the awakened soul with the sweetness and glory of its perfumed air and undimmed celestial sunshine. This night was one of those mystical seasons.

CHAPTER XVII.

Midnight Shadows.

THE Convict Camp, to which Glenn Hildegarde had made his visit of investigation several months previous to the present date of our story, was situated some distance south of Linwood.

A glance bestowed on it at this moment discloses two facts. One is, that it is hidden away in one of the wildest regions of Alabama. The other, that it is a fitting spot in which to incarcerate criminals. Mountainous peaks shut it in on every side until one has almost a feeling of suffocation as he thinks of being forced to pass any length of time within its narrow confines.

A sleepy-looking creek winds its slow way through the hills, and as it reaches the vale where the camp is pitched, its motions become so sluggish, and its waters of so sombre a hue that one is constrained to feel that it has been made a partaker, through sympathy, of the dull despair which holds the large majority of the inmates of the place in its relentless grasp.

The location of the camp was determined by the one consideration: the development of the coal mines at this point.

At the base of the mountain to the right of the camp are seen the long rows of coke ovens, with their fitful glare of fire and ever-ascending volume of smoke and gas. So deadly are the noxious fumes from these ovens that the entire mountain-side against which they are placed present to the shrinking gaze only one vast picture of death and desolation. Every vestige of green, every tender herb, blossoming plant and towering tree have shrivelled and withered under its blasting breath until only bare skeletons, denuded of all sign of life, remain.

The scene is desolate and depressing beyond the power of words to describe, and the young lady who now looks forth at the midnight hour from the open window of a small cottage perched high on the bluffs to the south of the camp, sighs as she whispers: "What a perfect picture of 'Dante's Inferno!' No wonder the poor fellows down there in the camp have the feeling that hell itself can hardly offer them anything more horrible or ghastly. My God, have pity upon them! Help me, even me, to carry to those famishing, perishing souls the waters of life!"

The whisper ends in a sob. For a moment she bows her face on the window ledge, and swift tears course down her cheeks.

Then she brushes them hastily aside, raises her head and takes a lengthened survey of the scene before her.

The long lines of leaping, flaring, dull red flame, with the over-hanging clouds of smoke, light up the valley with a lurid vividness that is almost startling. But the light is strange and uncanny, and only deepens the impression that one is gazing on some scene from which the veil has, for a moment, been brushed aside, found deep down in the regions of despair.

At the present moment heavy masses of black clouds drape the sky. Not a star is visible. Nought but the flames, the smoke, the bare, bald mountain-side, the heavy shadows, where the weird light from the ovens does not penetrate, and the frowning vault o'er-arching all, can be seen.

Agnes Hudson's father and mother are missionaries in this camp. One single-hearted, God-fearing woman, a daughter of Alabama, had toiled and prayed, alone and unaided, for years; had visited legislature after legislature armed only with the need of the poor creatures confined within these camps, which are scattered

all through her native State; and with an impassioned sense of these needs on her heart and tongue, had labored and plead their cause until she had at last gained her wish, and a missionary has been appointed for each encampment.

In Alabama, as in some other of her sister States, the iniquitous system still prevails of "leasing out" her convicts to companies and syndicates, to work in mines and quarries, as well as in other places where severe manuel labor is required.

The death rate in these camps, with no adequate sanitary regulations, is sometimes appalling.

In the one of which we are now writing, however, great changes for the better have been wrought during the brief years the missionaries have been stationed there, until now the health-rate, and atmosphere in all directions, is wonderfully improved.

What self-sacrifice it had cost Mr. and Mrs. Hudson, who are of high birth, cultured association and refined instincts, as well as of liberal education, to fill the post required of them, only God and their own hearts can tell. But the call had come to them as the voice of the Eternal, and this had been sufficient to stifle all their natural scruples, and cause them to enter

joyfully the open door where the Divine Hand beckoned them.

Agnes is their only daughter, and it was when, or after, she had paid what was intended to be at the time, merely a flying visit to her parents in their new field of labor, that any thought had been entertained of her sharing their home and mission. But her interest and sympathy for the boys she found in the camp had been so keenly aroused, and her desire to help them had become so intense, that her pleadings to be allowed to remain and take charge of this branch of the work, had at last prevailed.

For one year now she has taken entire oversight of one of the night schools where only boys in their teens are admitted, those over this age being taught by her parents in a separate apartment. Her whole soul is in her work, and the Sabbath-school class over which she presides, where the same boys are her scholars, has become to her the sweetest portion of her life. Once and again she has seen young hearts so melted by the story of divine love that sin has been renounced, and the wayward feet turned Zion-ward.

She has also become a potent factor in the hospital work, showing such ready skill in cheer-

ing and helping the sick ones, of whom there are always a large number in ward, that her presence is looked for by the poor unfortunates much as a burst of sunshine is welcomed on a dark and cloudy day by hearts bowed down in gloom and sorrow.

At the present hour her heart is burdened for a man who is apparently at death's door, and who is considered by the entire camp as being the most hardened offender among them. His age is about sixty, and the crimes charged against him are innumerable. His time of imprisonment is for life, and up to the present moment all efforts to reach and win his heart have been unavailing.

It is because her anxiety for this man has been too great to permit her to sleep, that we find her at the hour of midnight seated by her open window, gazing out over the lurid picture painted against the back-ground of the night, which has now become so familiar to her as to excite but a passing shudder. As she thus sits engaged in silent prayer, a low knock sounds on her door. She swiftly answers the summons, and finds her father standing without.

"I felt sure you were not alseep, dear, so I came for you. Poor old Blue is sinking fast, and I hoped you might be able to reach him be-

fore he passes into the stupor the doctor says will close his life. He will listen to you as to no one else."

"I am glad to go with you," Agnes answers, hastily throwing a mantle about her shoulders.

The sick man has been placed in a little shed-room, off to one side of the rude hospital building, his condition being so critical as to demand separation from the other patients.

His haggard face is drawn with pain as Agnes bends over him. He turns his head away from her, at first, but her gentle voice of sympathy at length causes him to turn toward her, saying, brokenly: "Yers good ter come. But ye needn't go ter talkin' ter me 'bout God. I hates him now jis' ez I allus telled ye I did, an' I reckon he hates me. This yere pain he's er putten onter me looks that er way."

In vain Agnes tells him of God's love and pity, and of Christ's death on the cross, that he —old man Blue—might become a sharer of his joy and blessedness.

"Thet sounds all right fur sich ez hez er mind ter swaller hit. But old Blue Blazes larnt his lesson long afore ye wuz borned, an' he's goin' ter swelter in ther pit, sho', ef ther be sich er place fur sich fellers as I be, what hates God wuss'n wuss ev'ry hour I lives."

The only name this man had ever given as belonging to him was that of "Blue Blazes."

"Hit fits me 'zackly, 'cordin' ter ther parson's sarmints." The convicts always alluded to Mr. Hudson as "the parson." "I's hed blue blazes from hell er-runnin' through my heart ever sence I wuz borned, I reckon, an' they's thar now," he had been wont to declare to his comrades before he was taken ill. Then he would add, with a hoarse laugh: "Don' ye smell ther brimstone when ye comes 'bout me?"

This man has long been called the hardest case ever brought to the camp, and even his fellow-criminals have often shrank from him in horror. Oaths and blasphemy fill his conversation, and it is only recently, since he has been brought to the hospital, that he has been careful to refrain from such language when Mr. and Mrs. Hudson, or Agnes, are present.

Finding she can make no impression on his hardened heart, Agnes now kneels beside his cot, pouring out her soul in prayer to God. While no sound is heard, her moving lips betray to the sick man that she is interceding for him before the mighty One, whom he hates. This fact increases his restlessness, and this at length becomes so marked that Mr. Hudson gently places his hand on his daughter's shoulder, stooping to

breathe into her ear: "Your presence, after all, seems to make him worse. I am sorry, but you have done all that you can, and now it will be better that you retire. I seem to have lost all hope. Your coming, I felt, was the last chance. But we can both continue to pray."

Without a word she arises and stands, for a moment, gazing down on the pallid face before her. As she does so these words flash into her mind: "Whatsoever is bound on earth is bound in heaven," immediately followed by others so plainly manifest to her mental vision that they seem written with letters of fire before her natural eyes: "And this is the confidence that we have in him, that if we ask anything according to his will, he heareth us. And if we know that he hear us, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him."

Her face lights up with sudden joy, and she turns away saying in her heart: "I thank thee, blessed Saviour, for these promises. Now I can hold on to thee for this man's soul with confidence, for thy precious Word tells us that thou 'willest not the death of any man,' but that thou 'wouldst have all men to be saved.' "

She spends the remainder of the night beside her bed, sometimes on her knees, and again prostrate on the rug beside it, pouring out her soul

in supplication for old man Blue, with no shadow of doubt dimming her faith as to his ultimate salvation.

As morning begins to pencil the east with rays of rosy light, she falls into a refreshing sleep from which she is aroused, two hours later, by hearing her father say in an adjoining room: "He is quiet and seems to be decidedly better. This is contrary to the doctor's verdict, who said he would pass into a stupor toward morning, from which he would never arouse. I can but believe the change is in answer to prayer."

"Father in heaven, how I thank thee," Agnes breathes with smiling lips and shining eyes, as she proceeds to bathe her face and arrange her disordered toilet.

Her countenance holds a peace and joy that tell of a heart at perfect rest, and when she seats herself by the window to read her morning chapter, contrary to her usual custom of following a regular course, she turns to the book of Psalms and selects a pæan of joyful praise over which she lingers a long time.

The breakfast bell finds her thus engaged, and as she arises and places her Bible in its accustomed place on her table, she breaks forth into happy song, voicing the joy of her heart in the words:

"Praise him, praise him,
Jesus, our blessed Redeemer!
Sing, O earth, his wonderful love proclaim;
Hail him, hail him, highest archangel in glory;
Strength and honor give to his holy name.
Like a shepherd Jesus will guide his children;
In his arms he carries them all day long;
Praise him, praise him, tell of his excellent greatness;
Praise him, praise him ever in joyful song."

Her cheery song and shining countenance seem almost out of place to the little group in the next room, as she joins them a moment later. All are distressed over the approaching death of the hardened convict, and as they have not the key to her happiness, cannot understand her mood. But their confidence in her is such that they soon perceive that she must have received a fresh touch from the divine One who is ever abiding in their midst, and in consequence a gentle glow soon begins to steal about their own hearts, and hope for the sick man revives.

Agnes is not a religious enthusiast, by any means, although her religion is not devoid of enthusiasm. Her basis of plain, simple common sense guards her from error and dangerous mysticism, and also gives to her spiritual life a practical bent which commends it to all with whom she is brought in contact.

She is a firm believer in the indwelling presence of Christ in the soul, through the power of

the Holy Spirit, and thus believing she is ever on the alert to know his will, and eager to follow in any path where he may want to lead her. Her present assurance, that it is the will of God that old man Blue shall be speedily saved, might seem to some a species of fanaticism.

But such is not the case. She has simply been made conscious that the truth of the words spoken by Jesus to his disciples, and through them to all believers throughout the ages, that "when he, the Comforter, shall come, he will bring all things I have told you to your remembrance," has been exemplified to her, by giving to her, at the very moment her faith needed it, the promise of Holy Writ, that her prayer for the convict had been heard.

And if heard then granted. And this she believed and claimed on the authority of the Word of God as found in Mark xi. 24 (R. V.), "Therefore, I say unto you, all things whatsoever ye pray and ask for, believe that ye have received them, and ye shall have them."

Also 1 John v. 14, 15, which has already been quoted, but will be repeated here: "And this is the boldness which we have toward him, that, if we ask anything according to his will, he heareth us; and if we know that he hear us whatsoever we ask we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him."

Thus, on a purely Scriptural basis, followed by an inward assurance, the seal of the Spirit of Jesus to her faith, she believes beyond doubt, that the sick man will be pardoned and saved before he dies. From this assurance springs her joy and her song of praise.

May some reader of these lines learn, just now, her steps of faith, which will ever bring certain victory in prayer, if followed in the Spirit.

CHAPTER XVIII.

The Morning Breaks.

IN the missionary's household was a godly woman, a distant cousin of Mrs. Hudson's, who took upon herself the entire burden of the housekeeping, thus leaving the others free to give their time to the convicts. This woman, Mrs. Kate Torrey by name, was a widow, and her only child, little Millie, a tot of some three or four summers, was the pet and delight of the home-circle. The little one was bright and amiable in disposition and beautiful to look upon, the expression of her countenance being remarkably sweet and engaging.

For obvious reasons the child had never been permitted to visit the camp, but on the morning of which we write, following Agnes Hudson's night of prayer for old man Blue, as they gathered about the breakfast table Mrs. Torrey remarked: "I am so glad to know old Blue is better. God may yet save him if we can only have faith."

"I want to take Millie over with me to the hospital this morning when I go to visit him.

He once told me he had had a daughter, in his early manhood, who died when she was very young. You will be willing for her to go with me, will you not, Cousin Kate? She need see no one but Blue, and the boy who waits upon him." As she asked the question Agnes gazed expectantly into Mrs. Torrey's face.

The mother hesitated, but Millie at once exclaimed: "Es. Me want to do see poo' sick man. Millie tarry sick man some fowers."

This settled it, and soon after breakfast, with her little hands tightly clasping some fragrant white lilies and blue violets, the child trotted happily along by her cousin's side, prattling incessantly of the "poo' sick man" she was going to visit.

Blue's countenance looked less haggard than during the night, but the frown which habitually rested upon it was still there—even more pronounced, Agnes saw with a feeling of dismay, than usual.

He scarcely noticed her pleasantly-spoken greeting, and at once turned his face away from her toward the wall. He had not seen Millie, who, suddenly rendered timid by her new surroundings, hung behind her cousin, peering out from her sheltering skirts toward the bed.

Agnes stooped and whispered a few words into

the child's ear. The next instant, with her momentary shrinking swallowed up in compassion for the sufferer, she advanced close to the bedside, saying: "Here's some fowers for 'ou, poo' sick man. Millie sowey for 'ou."

If an electric shock had struck him the man could not have been more startled. He turned his face swiftly toward the child and gasped out: "Whar did ye come frum? What is yore name? "

For an instant she shrank away, frightened by the sight of his stern, emaciated countenance. But the next moment a smile curved Blue's lips—the first Agnes had ever seen there—and his voice grew almost tender as he repeated: "What is yore name? Whar did ye come frum?"

Reassured by the smile and the tone, the child answered: "I's Millie. Me tumed f'om home. Here's some fowers for 'ou."

She laid the lilies and violets on the pillow, but he did not seem to heed them. He whispered: "I had a Millie onct. And she looked like ye duz. But God took her, an' I hev hated him ever sence."

"Dod loves 'ou, poo' sick man. 'Ou mus' love Dod. Millie loves Dod; an' me loves 'ou too, tause 'ou is sick."

Tears began to roll slowly down old Blue's

sunken cheeks. He reached out and took one of the child's soft little hands in his own. She did not withdraw it, but again said: "Millie sowey for 'ou. Jesus sowey, too."

"Why did he take my Millie away from me, then? Ef he hed a left her wi' me I mought hev ben a good man. Oh! God, if I could only see her onct mo'!"

This was the moment for which Agnes had waited. She quickly said: "Jesus wants you to see her. He has kept her for you, safe and pure and beautiful; more beautiful than when you last saw her. But you would want to be changed—made different—before you met her, would you not?"

"Yes, yes. She would be afeared o' me, now." Then he fixed his eyes on Millie's face and said, almost fiercely: "I would be willin' to be skinned alive ef so doin' I mought be made ez I ust ter be when she would put her leetle arms about my neck an' say: 'Me loves you, heaps an' heaps, daddy.'"

Very gently Agnes told him in a few simple words, how God wanted to change him and make his soul pure and beautiful with Jesus Christ's own beauty and purity.

"Talk to him about hit," he said, as large tears kept rolling down his cheeks. "I don' seem

to kotch on, but ye kin mek him understand, pr'aps, how I's willin' to do anythin', anythin' a-tall he mought ax, ef on'y I kin see my leetle Millie onct agin."

Agnes whispered a few words to Millie, who instantly dropped on her knees by the bedside, folded her little hands, and said: "Dear Dod, poo' sick man wants to see his 'ittle dirl. Pease make him dood, so he tan see her, an' tan live wiv 'ou in heaven. For dear Jesus sake. Amen."

And then Agnes poured out her heart to God in a prayer that reached the loving heart above, and brought a speedy answer.

Scarcely had she ceased when Blue burst out: "I kin never see her; nur him nuther. Never. I's ez black ez hell, an' he wouldn't never let sich a feller ez me come 'bout him."

"But he himself says: 'Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow.' The blacker you see yourself to be the quicker he can make you white."

But he answered sorrowfully: "I don' seem to see hit that a-way. Ef I had lived sort o' decent-like, he mought ha' let me in. But ye don' know how black an' low-down filthy I be."

"You would never care to take a bath, would you, unless you felt you needed it? You don't

wash your hands, do you, unless you see they are soiled?" As Agnes asked this question, her heart was pleading with God to give this convicted soul the light he needed.

He pondered a while before he replied: "I jis' seem to git a sort o' glimpse-like o' what ye mean." Then, gazing into Millie's wistful face, he again cried: "I'd be willin'—yes I would—not on'y to be skinned alive, but to die one orful death, ef so bein' I mought hope to see my leetle Millie onct agin, a-layin' smilin' an' purty in his arms, ez ye says she is a-layin' to-day."

"But he, Jesus Christ the Son of God, loved you so much that he died in your place, and now, all that you have to do is to believe this. Tell him you thank him, and ask him to make your soul as white as his precious blood can wash it. It is only as you are thus washed and made clean that you can ever see him in peace, and be with your child." Then, seeing the emotion that mastered him, she added: "He—our loving Jesus—is waiting right here this minute, to forgive all your dreadful sins and to blot them out, wash them away, where no one can ever find them again. Can't you trust him just now? He says, 'Him that cometh unto me I will in nowise cast out.'"

"But how's a feller ez mired in sin ez I be, to

come? Wouldn' he jis' nachully topple me over ef I dared show myse'f to him? Thet's jis' what he ort to do, 'cos' I's cussed him an' hated him mos' all my life."

"When wicked and cruel men spit on him and reviled him, and finally nailed him to the cross, he asked his Father to forgive them. He loved you so much that he suffered that terrible death in order that you might be forgiven and made pure and spotless, and live in heaven with him and with your little Millie forever and forever. Do you think you could ever curse him again, Blue, now that you begin to see how long he has loved you, and how he has kept your Millie safe in his arms, waiting for you to come and claim her from him, all these years since she left you?"

The old man was now sobbing. Little Millie, in childish awe and sympathy, leaned over on the bed, and her tears mingled with his, as she said: "Don' cwy. Dod will let 'ou live wiv 'ou 'ittle dirl if 'ou is dood, 'tause Dod loves 'ou."

At these words Blue broke out with: "O Man what died fur me! won't ye holp me now? I's plumb sorry I's been so orful mean an' ugly. I won't never cuss ye no mo'; no I won't, so holp me God! I never knowed afore how much ye keered fur me. Ef ye kin mek up yore min' to wash sich a black 'un ez I be—ez black ez hell

itse'f—why, I'll spend my las' breath a-thankin' ye. An' I'll tell the boys 'bout ye, too. They's heared me a-cussin' ye day in an' day out, an' they shell hear me a-praisin' ye, if ye'll jis' be good to me now."

He was silent a moment, and then began afresh: "I knows I don' desarve nuthin' but yore frown. But I's done drapt down in a deep hole, pears-like, an' onless you's a-min' to lift me out, I's done fur. Holp me, God! Do holp me, fur the sake o' the Man what died in my place!"

Even as the cry left his lips, the heavens parted—Christ breathed on him—and the unspeakable peace of God dropped into his soul. Old Blue had become "a new creature in Christ Jesus."

A shout of joy, of relief, of thanksgiving, a shout never before heard from his lips, broke from him. It reached far out beyond the room in which he was lying, and speedily brought both Mr. and Mrs. Hudson from the main hospital building, to learn the cause.

No verbal explanation was needed, for the transformation in Blue was so marked that these godly missionaries well understood the marvellous work which grace had wrought in the old man's soul.

In his rapture over the forgiveness God had granted him, he seemed for the time to have forgotten all about his child, and his desire to again behold her. His vision of Jesus, or, as he ever afterwards named him, "The Man what died fur me," blotted out all else from his mind, and left him nothing more to desire.

His joy was pathetic, and those who had heretofore only seen him in his sullenness and sin, could hardly recognize him as being the same man.

"Ye looks jis' like I allus 'lowed the angels looks," he at last said, raising his happy eyes to the faces gathered about his bed. Then he placed his hand on Millie's head, and added: "An' this yere leetle 'un air beautifuller than ye all."

Some moments later, after Mrs. Hudson had thoughtfully given him a cup of gruel, of which he drank eagerly, he added: "I mus' sho' git strong 'nuff now to hev a meetin' wi' the boys, an' tell 'em 'bout him—the Man what died fur me. Ef he kin wash sich a plumb black 'un ez I wuz, tell I feels ez white ez the snow I's seed many a time on top o' the hills, where nuthin' couldn't never sile hit nur mek hit black and gritty, why, he kin wash the las' one o' them ontill they feels the same way."

He soon after fell into a refreshing sleep, and Agnes and Millie stole noiselessly out, their mission ended.

If Agnes Hudson had ever felt that her life was circumscribed and dreary since she had chosen the convict camp as her home and field of labor, the feeling dropped away from her as she passed out of that room. A joy so intense thrilled and filled her that she seemed to understand what Jesus meant when he said to his disciples: "These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full."

"Father, how I thank thee for ever permitting me to come to this camp," she whispered deep down in her soul. "And for using me—even me—who am less than the least of all thy children, to point out to poor old Blue the way of life. Father, use him to win some other soul to thee before thou dost call him hence. I ask this for thy glory, and in the name of Jesus. Amen."

CHAPTER XIX.

Blue's Testimony.

BLUE'S strength rallied rapidly, until he was able, at the end of a few days, to sit up for two or three hours daily. He exhibited an eager wish to hold "a meetin' wi' the boys," as he expressed it, and his whole thought more and more centered on having this desire realized.

Agnes had never met the large body of the convicts, her work being entirely confined to the boys and to the hospital. But Blue insisted that she must be present at his meeting; so arrangements were at last made for the school to be omitted on a certain Friday night, and for all to gather in the large main room, where those who did not care to join the schools, spent their evenings.

Mr. Hudson had at first thought to have the meeting on Sunday, but Blue himself suggested that it would be wiser to allow the usual services to be held on that day, saying: "Fur ye kin read the Bible to 'em, and tell 'em how to live right, whilst I kin on'y tell 'em 'bout my bein' washed

clean by the Man what died fur me. An' I kin hev my say mos' any night, whilst ye kin on'y git 'em together fur preachin' on Sunday."

This seemed sensible, so his idea was carried out, and the men were told that Blue, who was now strong enough to walk to the main building by leaning on Mr. Hudson's arm, wanted to meet every man and boy in the stockade in the large room on that particular Friday night.

Great was the feeling of expectation among the convicts, for the boy who waited on Blue had told wonderful things of the change wrought in him.

"'Stid o' cussin' ez he ust ter do, he's mos' allus er whisperin' ter hisse'f ez happy ez er big sunflower. 'R else he's tryin' ter sing some o' them hymns Miss Hudson sings ter ther fellers in ther hosp'tal. Suthin's done fotched him 'round, sho', till he's like er nuther feller."

Various speculations were rife among the men concerning the change that had taken place in him, but the more general one was that he had "done gone crazy."

The attendant physician of the camp, who was a young man, and who, for the sake of the experience thus gained, was content to live near the stockade, heard of the meeting and evinced sufficient curiosity to attend it. He had been

puzzled by the change he observed in the old man, and as he had no means by which he could fathom it, he thought he would listen to Blue's own explanation. He was leaning toward infidelity, having read Ingersol, and imbibed some of the infidel's teachings about Christianity, yet his heart was restless and dissatisfied.

Blue's face was shining with happiness as he entered the room, leaning on the missionary's arm. A chair had been placed for him facing the men, and others close by him were waiting to be filled by Mr. and Mrs. Hudson and Agnes.

The young lady felt a pang so keen and sharp pierce through her heart as she looked over the faces before her, that, for a moment, her composure was shaken. Some of the countenances were so brutal and repulsive that she turned her gaze from them with a shudder. But many fine faces caught her attention—youthful faces, bearing no mark of the criminal on the clear, open brow. She recalled something she had once heard her father say, and her heart assented to its truth as she looked about her. The words were these:

"The worst criminals are not always those in the penitentiary. Those who have not been caught are often the most desperate and guilty,

and many a man is behind the bars, who, with half a chance, would have been a noble fellow."

As these thoughts passed through her mind, her father, at Blue's request, began a hymn. Many of the men joined in the singing, and it was interesting to note the heartiness with which they did so. The members of the schools were nightly trained in music, and this had proven one of the greatest blessings that had come to them through the labors of the missionaries.

As the last note died away Agnes was, for a moment, rendered pale and speechless by Blue saying: "Miss Agnes air a-goin' now to talk to the Man what died fur me an' fur you. An' I wish ev'ry one on ye would jis' drap onto yore knees while she tells him 'bout us."

For an instant Agnes was silent. Then she said, in a low voice: "Let my father lead in prayer."

"In cose the parson air a-goin' to," was Blue's ready response.

A few of the men knelt as Mr. Hudson began to pray, and all of the boys at once took the position requested.

A solemn silence stole over the room as the missionary's earnest appeal went up that a special blessing should rest on Blue while he testified to what the grace of God had wrought in his

soul, and also on the men, that they might be filled with a desire to obtain a similar precious experience.

"That's a squar' talk, straight to the pint, an' I knows God A'mighty hez done heerd it," was Blue's comment, given with smiling lips, as the invocation ended.

Another short hymn was sung, and then Blue arose and turned toward Agnes with the request:

"Now, Miss Agnes, it air yore turn to talk to the Man what died fur you an' fur me. Ax him to try hard to git holt o' some o' these fellers' hearts like he got holt o' mine. An' tell him not to turn 'em loose till they's plumb sick o' sin, an' ready to sarve him all the rest o' ther days."

Then he faced the men and said: "Jis' drap onto yore knees, boys, won't ye, whilst she's a-pleadin' 'fore God fur ye?"

Quite a number knelt in response to this request, and Agnes, with womanly timidity, began to pray. At first her voice was low and tremulous, and only those nearest her caught her words. But as she proceeded, she forgot her surroundings, and such a petition, a cry for souls, went up as no one in the room, with the exception of her father and mother and Blue, had ever before heard from human lips.

The Spirit of God came down as she prayed,

and hovered over the encampment, and several of the men began furtively to wipe their eyes with their shirt sleeves. When she ended, the young physician, who was seated in a corner by himself, and who was sitting bolt upright when she began, was leaning forward with his face hidden in his hands.

"Thet ar's a good beginnin'," Blue remarked, with a satisfied smile, as he looked around over the room. Then he began and told, in his crude language, about the wonderful change that God had wrought in his soul.

"Ye all knows what a black cuss I ware, an' how I hated the very name o' God A'wmighty. But ye cayn't know how hell-black my heart ware. I didn't know hit myse'f tell he, the Man what died fur me, begun to git close to me. I jis' thought I would die, an' I 'lowed I orter die an' drap down into the very hottest corner o' hell fur livin' ez I hed ben a-doin' mos' all my life, an' a-cussin' him, the Man what loved me 'nuff to die fur me.

"Boys, hit jis' got wuss an' wuss, an' I 'lowed thar wasn't nuthin' in all the univarse what could wash my black an' filthy heart clean. Miss Agnes, she tried to show how 't wuz, but I couldn' seem to kotch on. I jis' seemed a-sinkin' down, down into one black hole what had nary bottom; an' I jis' cried out fur God to holp me

an' liff me out ef he could mek up his min' to holp sich a hell-desarvin' feller ez I seed myse'f to be."

Blue paused a moment, and great beads of perspiration rolled down his face. It was plain that he was again living over the experience of which he was telling. The men were leaning forward on their benches, their hearts stirred and held by some invisible power that caused even the boldest among them to cower and quail under the old man's words.

When he again spoke there was a ring in his voice which had not before been there. He said: "Boys, jis' ez I cried out, ez I tolt ye 'bout doin', an' jis' ez I ware makin' up my min' thet I ware too low-down filthy an' mean fur God to trouble hisse'f 'bout me, the Man what died fur me totched me. I feeled his totch ez plain ez I ever felt a hand totch me in my life. Oh! I cayn't tell ye 'bout hit. I wisht I mought. But ez his hand ware laid onto my head I feeled suthin' warm an' comfortin'-like, jis' a-streamin' all over me an' all inside o' me."

He paused an instant, and his face shone with such a glow of happiness that two of the worst men before him, unable to bear the sight, got up and walked out of the room.

Blue's eyes filled with tears as he saw them depart.

"I wisht they hadn't runned away frum him," he said. "He ware a-seekin' of 'em jis' ez he cumed arter me."

Then he added, and as he proceeded, the light which had seemed to die out as the men withdrew, again mantled his face with a glow that was quite marvellous: "Ez the comfortin' feelin' got deeper an' deeper into my heart, I knowed I ware bein' washed clean. I didn' know how 'twuz done, nuther do I onderstand hit to-night. All I knowed wuz that suthin' warm an' comfortin'-like wuz a-goin' all through me, an' wherever hit went hit washed me clean.

"An' boys, I's clean to-night. The Man what died fur me hez looked arter me ever sence that day. He hez made hit his bis'ness to keep me clean. I jis' knowed I ware no 'count, an' I couldn' do nuthin', nohow; so I jis' kep' lookin' to him ev'ry blessed minnit. An' I tolt him what a mizable, no 'count feller I be, an' onless he kep' close by me the devil would git his clutches onto me ag'in, sho'.

"But he's done kep' me, boys, an' I feels ez clean to-night, a-most, pears-like, ez I shell feel when I gits into heaven. An' I mos' feels ez how I's got thar a'ready, though my ole carcas air still here in this stockade.

"I hed a leetle gal, onct, boys, an' she died when she ware jis' three year ole. I hated God

arter he tuk her frum me, 'cause she ware the on'y bein' on earth what loved me. My wife hed done gone off wi' another feller an' leff the baby wi' me, an' I jis' nachally made a idol out'n her. Wal, when Miss Agnes fust tolt me I mought see my leetle Millie ag'in ef I ware made clean, so's I could git in whar she stays, my heart mos' broke wi' longin' to git her into my arms ag'in."

Blue here paused and looked earnestly around on his hearers. Tears were rolling down many rough faces. One man was sobbing. Blue singled him out, and said:

"Yas, Tim, ye knows jis' how I felt, fur ye's done hearn the clods o' dirt a-rattlin' down onto yer leetle boy, same as I hearn 'em a-drappin' onto my pore Millie's coffin. An' ev'ry clod made my heart feel lonesomer an' lonesomer, same ez they made yourn feel. But listen, Tim. When he came to me t'other day, the Man what died fur ye, an' fur me, I 'peared to lose sight o' my leetle gal. I wuz so tuk up wi' him; an' his love seems to me to-night to be sich a wondoful, condescendin' sort o' love, an' hit jis' wrops me all about ontil I feels so satafied an' comfort'ble like, thet I don' studdy much 'bout Millie. I knows I shell see her 'cause he's got her safe wi' him, but I 'pears to be a-studyin' mo' ez how I kin git ye

boys to find him like I's done found him, then I be 'bout meetin' the chile.

"Boys, don' ye want to find him to-night? Tim, lad, don' ye? He's a-holdin' yore Jimmy safe in his arms fur ye, awaitin' fur ye to come to him to git cleaned up, so's ye kin see the leetle feller onct mo'."

Old Blue arose to his feet as he thus spoke, and in his earnestness held out his tremulous hand toward the man whom he thus addressed.

The convict, who was a "lifer," as the men term those whose sentence is for life, slowly arose, stepped forward and clasped the old man's out-stretched hand, saying: "Deed I duz, Blue. But thar's nary chance fur me. I's done gone too fur ter be turned back."

"Ye hain't goned ez fur ez I hed, Tim. Ef I could be headed off frum hell, ez I ware headed off, an' a slice o' heaven drapt down into my soul like the Man what died fur me hez done drapt hit down, he kin do ez much fur ye."

Then Blue turned and beckoned to Agnes to come and talk with the man. As she moved quickly forward Mr. Hudson told the others they might all stand, and those who cared to do so might come forward and shake hands with Blue.

Many of them gathered around him, and it was pathetic to hear him urge them, one after another, to "come to the Man what died fur me an' fur you, an' let him clean ye up, inside an' out, so's ye kin bar to stan' in his presence on t'other side o' the river."

The young physician came behind the others, and when the convicts had stepped back from the old man, he went up to him, and as he took his outstretched, tremulous hand, he said: "I have listened to your words to-night with the deepest interest. I believe everything you have told us. I knew you before this change came to you, and I can see that nothing short of a supernatural power could have done the work I see has been wrought. I was a skeptic when I came in here to-night. Now I am glad to avow myself a believer in God, and in his Son Jesus Christ. I am sure one reason I imbibed infidelity so easily was because I have never before met any one who lived as I thought a man would have to live if he had really met God as you say you have met him."

Blue's face was shining with joy as he listened to these words, yet the tears kept dropping down his cheeks.

"I hopes, Doctor, ye'll soon come to b'lieve in him fur yorese'f, an' 'cause ye's done felt his

totch onto yore head an' in yore heart ez I hez felt hit, an' not jis' 'cause ye 'lows thet what I done telt ye here to-night air true," was all he said, as he turned to see what had become of Tim.

He found the convict on his knees, with Agnes on one side of him and Mr. Hudson on the other. One of the younger of the boys was kneeling by a chair not far away, intently listening to Mrs. Hudson, who was trying to point his hungry, seeking heart to Christ.

They did not linger long, for it was time the men were at rest, but before they separated Tim had promised Blue that he never would give up, now that he had made a start, until he had found the same comfort and satisfaction the older man testified to experiencing.

"Now I's plumb ready to go ef the Man what died fur me wants to call me," Blue announced cheerfully, as he reached his little room.

No one thought much of the words, at the moment, for he was so much better that Mr. Hudson hoped he might live for months, and he craved the influence of his altered life over the men.

Mrs. Hudson and Agnes bade him a kind good night, and went at once to their cottage. Mr. Hudson passed on into the hospital to look after some of the sick ones, and, a half hour later,

put his head inside the door of the old man's room, saying: "Good night, Blue. This has been a good evening's work. Some of the results will meet us over on the other shore, I have not a doubt."

"Good-bye, parson. I's — a-goin'. Tell — Miss — Agnes — the — Man — what — died for — me — hez — done — come — an' — I's a-follerin' — him. Hit's — all — right. He's done — totched — me — ag'in."

The missionary stepped quickly to the side of the bed. Even as he reached him the convict gave a sigh, a gasp, and his soul passed out to dwell forever more in the presence of the Man who died for him.

Many of the convicts shed tears of real sorrow over the old man's grave, and very gentle were the hands that lowered him to his last resting place. He was buried in a picturesque spot not far distant from the encampment, and Mr. Hudson, at an early date, placed an iron fence around the tomb.

Humanly speaking, it would have been much better for Blue to have lived and let his newly-found light shine out into the dark corners of the stockade, blessing his fellow-convicts, both by testimony and life. But probably God saw that it was best for his mission to be an exceedingly brief one, and so took him at once to glory.

CHAPTER XX.

What's in a Name?

"Now, hush er bye baby!
  Ther angels du keep
Er singin' and wobblin'
  My darlin' ter sleep;
Don' frown up yer face;
Yer's in ther right place,
An' ther's nuthin' to skeer at,
  So why sh'd yer weep?"

So sang Nancy Welldon as she sat in her doorway, crooning her original song to the child that lay peacefully sleeping across her lap.

Crates sat astride a log before the open door, and as he listened to his sister-in-law's primitive lullaby, he smiled. Nancy called it grinning. In answer to her sharp inquiry: "What yer grinning er-bout, Crates?" the boy said: "I ware on'y er-wonderin' ef ther babby would'n be proper glad ef ther angels yers er-singin' 'bout would go erway home an' leave him erlone."

"I don' see no sense in what yer sayin'," Nancy replied, vigorously trotting the infant, who, aroused by the cessation of the song and the

sound of the rather sharp voices, squirmed restlessly.

"Don' yer? Wal, ther's on'y one kind o' angels he's er-hearin' sing 'bout him jis' now, an' they's skeeters. An' ef they's er-biten him ez fierce-like ez they's er-goin' fur me, I don' blame him fur frownin', nur fur cryin', nuther."

As he spoke the boy arose, yawned, and went around the house toward the highway.

Nancy glanced after him with a smile curving the corners of her mouth.

"Crates air no fool, ef he air er ill 'un," she muttered. "An' he's sho' changin'-like sence he's done tuk up so wi' Miss Mabel. P'raps, arter all, he'll grow ter be er likely sort o' man, though I duz 'low he'll allus be er pow'ful weak 'un when hit comes ter keepin' his temper down."

She arose and placed the sleeping child on the bed, taking care to shield his face from the mosquitoes by laying a piece of old netting over him. She smiled again, as she did so, whispering to herself: "Who but Crates would er thought 'bout skeeters bein' ther on'y angels ther leetle babby's er-hearin' singin' erbout him? They duz sing, though, sho'. An' they kin bite monstrous hard fur sich leetle fellers. 'Pears like they's more pestersome then I hev ever seed 'em afore. P'raps hits 'cause hits been er-rainin' so much

sence ther sun hez done cros't ther line. Wonder what sort o' line hit be, an' why hit allus hez ter cross over jis' 'zactly on sich er day?"

This question seemed to linger with her, and as she busied herself about her household duties she continued, as was her habit when alone, to talk aloud:

"Hit don' stand ter reason thet enny feller hez done gone up inter ther sky ter find out what ther sun air er-doin'. How's they ter know, then, 'bout hit er-crossin' ary line? I done watched—fur quite er spell—t'other day, when Miss Mabel 'lowed ter me that ther Eeker-knocks—ez she called hit—ware er-comin' that very day. An' I did'n see no line, 'tall. Nuthin' but er line o' black clouds, an' I kin see them mos' enny time when hit air er-goin' ter rain."

She at length settled down over a piece of sewing, and as her needle flew in and out of the material from which she was fashioning a garment for the baby, her thoughts seemed to keep time with its rapid movements.

"Wonder whar Crates hez gone ter? Sence he's er-tryin' ter be kinder good-like, an' not so ill ez he use ter be, I sorter misses him when he gits out'n sight. But law sakes! I'se got ter git over thet feelin', sho', fur ther school air goin' ter begin ther fust o' nex' month, an'

Crates 'lows he air er-goin' ter be ther fust boy onter ther place. God air monstrous good ter him, sho', ter hev give him sich er awful kind friend ez Miss Mabel be ter him."

If one were disposed to credit the old saying that "when one talks of the angels he is sure to hear the rustling of their wings," the present occasion might offer proof as to its truth, for just as the last words left Nancy's lips the sound of horses' hoofs were heard, and the next moment Mabel Hildegarde herself, accompanied by a smart-looking negro boy as groom, drew rein before the cabin door.

Her entrance into the dingy room seemed to bring a glow of sunshine across its sombre coloring, and Nancy greeted her with a face that betokened unalloyed appreciation of the visit.

After greetings had been exchanged, and the welfare of the baby inquired into, Mabel said: "I have ridden down to see if we cannot get Crates to come to us at once. That is," and she gazed earnestly into Nancy's face, "if you will not feel timid about staying here alone."

"What sh'd I feel timid erbout, I sh'd like ter know? Hain't I been er-stayin' here erlone, 'cept when Hit ware er-livin' an' er makin' moosic fur me ter work by, fur mos' four year, off'n on? Crates, he air been er-workin' wi'

"If this yere house filled chuck full o' gold an' jewels ware sot right on top o' my head, I couldn' feel no mo' happier then I duz this blessed minnit"

(Page 119.)

Mr. Mason's folks tell ther gun ware stoled an' they 'lowed he hed been ther feller what tuk hit. An' sence er nigger air proved ther thief, Crates air so tetchy 'bout them er-thinkin' he stolt hit, he hain't never been willin' ter go back wi' 'em. Thet's huk-comes him ter be at home long wi' me now. Yer's welcome ter him ter-morrow, ef yer wants him, an' Crates 'ull be monstrous proud ter be at ther Hall. He 'lows ther good Lord hain't never made no mo' sich folks ez ye an' yer brother be."

Mabel received this rather lengthy speech with her usual amiability. It always interested her to listen to Nancy, and she frequently asked her questions merely to induce her to converse freely.

She now explained that she was expecting to ride about the mountain a good deal in the interests of her brother's school, and as he was too busy to accompany her, and was unwilling for her to be out on the highway alone, they wanted Crates for this duty.

Nancy smiled as she heard this explanation as to why her young relative's presence was desired at the Hall.

"Crates 'ull be plumb sot up ter think he's ter be 'lowed ter ride roun' wi' ye, 'stid o' Mr. Hildegarde er-goin'. I'se fearin' he'll git thet

proud-like yer'll hev ter give him er pow'ful settin' down 'fore he's been thar long."

Mabel smilingly assured her that she was willing to take the risk, and at this point in the conversation the baby suddenly 'roused from slumber, and both women at once gave him their undivided attention.

"How cute he is. And what lovely eyes he has. He is going to be a beautiful child," Mabel remarked, as she patted his softly-tinted cheek affectionately.

"Yas, I 'lows ez much. An' I's been er-studdyin' right smart o' late 'bout er name fur him. Thar's one I picked out'n ther Bible which sounds orful purty, but I'se er-thinkin' hit's er gal's name."

"Which name is that?" Mabel inquired, with lively interest.

"Hit's ther one in ther las' chapter o' fust C'rin'thi'ns. Hit duz read so purty an' smooth-like I mos' wish ther babby ware er gal, so's I could give hit ter him," Nancy answered, smoothing the child's tumbled curls with pride in face and tone.

"I don't seem to recall any name in that chapter," Mabel began, with a puzzled expression. Then she added: "Yes, I do remember, now, that Paul speaks of Aquila and Priscilla. Is it Priscilla that you like so much?"

"No'n deed. That ar hain't purty. I'd allus be er-thinkin' 'bout ole Miss Prissy Baker, which ware ther ugl'ist white woman I ever sot my two eyes onter, ef I sh'd call ther babby arter thet ar name. No, I wants er name what's onusual, sich ez 'ull fit him. Ther one I 'lowed ware sich er plumb purty one, wuz Nathmy-Mary-Nathy. Mary's sorter common-like, but hit sounds nice, an' I hain't never heered anybody what ware called Nathmy nur Nathy." [1]

Mabel's countenance, which, at first, had worn a mystified expression as Nancy pronounced her chosen appellation, suddenly broke into the sunshine of smiles and dimples. Nancy sighed as she added: "But bein' ez he hain't er gal, an' ez I cayn't change him inter one, nohow, I'ull hev ter pick out some other name, I reckon. But I don' b'lieve I's goin' ter find one I likes ez well ez I likes thet air one."

"But, as you say, that one will not answer at all," Mabel hastened to say, as soon as she could command herself sufficiently to speak. "Why not call him Paul? That is both strong and beautiful."

But Nancy shook her head.

"I wants er long-soundin', sort o' dingafied 'un, sich ez 'ull mek folks onderstand he been 't

[1] This is an actual occurrence.

no 'onery, no 'count trash," she answered, in an insistant tone.

"Well, Jehoshaphat is a name one does not very often hear, and it is quite long-sounding, too," Mabel suggested, her eyes dancing with mischief. "Or perhaps Zerubbabel would suit, or Abednego."

Nancy gravely tilted her head over to one side while she considered.

"Tell me some more on 'em. Suthin' like they be, on'y let 'em be longer an' mo' dingafied and uncommon-like," she said, at last.

Mabel wrinkled her forehead in a vain effort to bring from the depths of her memory exactly what Nancy wanted.

"How would Jeroboam answer?" she suggested, with mirth-sparkling eyes.

"I likes thet 'un purty well. An' I likes ther fust 'un yer give me, too, pow'ful well. Je-hosh-er-fat's plumb big-like, on'y I's fearin' ther boys mought larf at him, when he's done growed up so's ter go ter ther counted school. They'd mos' likely call him 'Hosh-er-fat,' s'pecially ez he's done growed ter be so fattified sence I got him. Jis' see his double chin." And she raised the child into a sitting posture that her visitor might the better take in his increasing avoirdupois.

Mabel praised the double rows of dimpled

flesh, and then, going to a stand on which lay Nancy's Bible, she took it in her hand, saying: "I am anxious for you to be satisfied with a name for him before I leave. He is now plenty old enough to be honored with a more personal title than Baby."

She turned the leaves slowly, and at last paused at the eighth chapter of Isaiah.

"Here is one that will be long enough, if that is what you want," she said, with a merry laugh. "Listen. How do you like 'Maher-shaal-hash-baz?' "

"Why, thet ar's pow'ful high-soundin'-like," was Nancy's response, while her eyes brightened. "Mayor, yer knows, air er title o' honor. Folks mought call him thet, ez much ez they pleased ter, an' hit couldn't pester him, nohow. Ther mayor o' Huntsville air ther plumb biggest man in ther hull city, so Crates done tolt me, an' he hez things done 'zackly ez he hez er mind ter hev 'em done. Nobody cayn't say nuthin' 'gin' him, nuther, r'else he kin pack 'em off ter jail, fust thing. I'll call him arter thet name, sho! Jis' read hit out erg'in, slow-like, won't yer?"

Mabel did so, divided between a desire to laugh and a vain regret that she had introduced the dreadful name to Nancy's knowledge. She

had entertained no thought, at the moment she turned to it, that the woman would think of using it for the baby.

"'Mayor-shell-hash-baz,'" Nancy repeated after her. "'Pears like ther folks in them days must er been monstrous fond o' hash," she added, thoughtfully, yet with a humorous twinkle in her eye.

"Why so?" Mabel innocently inquired.

"Don' yer see? Thar's 'Jer-hash-er-fat,' an' here's 'Mayor-shell-hash-baz,' two dishes o' hash, ez yer mought say, at one meal o' vittles." She paused to laugh, a moment, over her attempted witticism, and then said, with sudden solemnity: "I shell call ther chile 'Mayor-shell-hash-baz,' an' Crates an' me kin nip hit off ter 'Mayor' an' still hit 'ull be er pow-ful high-soundin' name."

And Mahershaalhashbaz he was called, ever after, much to Mabel's amusement, and somewhat to her chagrin, for she felt that she was, in a measure, responsible for the child's having received such an unpronounceable and mirth-provoking cognomen.

Crates took up his abode at Linwood the following day, and, as Nancy had foreseen, great was his pride and delight in the position Glenn assigned him.

To be counted worthy of being Mabel's escort and protector during her rides about the mountain, was a greater honor than he had ever dreamed possible could fall to his lot. He filled the position with so much dignity and delicacy that both brother and sister began to see that the boy who had needed wee Lassie to "help him be good" was a character of stronger and finer mould than either had heretofore suspected.

How many such characters there are, all about us, if only the needed "help" were given, whereby the ore from the golden vein might be brought to the surface before it becomes hopelessly buried under the rubbish of shiftless and sinful habits—who may say?

CHAPTER XXI.

"Nary Chance."

AMID his ever-increasing duties to get his Home and School opened by the first of October, Glenn took another day to run down for a brief inspection of the convict camp. Whether his sole motive was to study the boy-convicts, or whether an unacknowledged desire to again meet Miss Hudson moved him to make this second visit, we will not inquire.

Mabel was too fully engrossed in her preparations to fill, successfully, the position in the school which she had elected was to be under her own special charge, to be able to spare the time to accompany him. But she extracted from him a promise that he would at no very distant day repeat his visit, and arrange it on such a date as would allow her to go with him.

Things at the camp, to the outside observer, were progressing as usual. The men worked in the mines during the day, under the surveillance of the guards, and if one and another, at various times, made an attempt to escape, and lost his life by being hunted down with the hounds, or

shot by the pursuing guards, little notice was taken of the event. They were only "convicts," and every man's hand and heart, with few exceptions, were against them.

If they completed their allotted task satisfactorily—and it must be admitted that those who "worked" this band of men, unlike some in other camps, tried not to place the amount demanded of each man beyond his ability to perform—they got along fairly well, especially if they carefully kept the rules of the camp. Their lot was not greatly harder, under these circumstances, than that of many a miner outside of the camp, with this exception: they were deprived of their freedom and separated from their families, and bore about with them the consciousness of a disgrace that nothing could obliterate.

Many of these men were "lifers," and the helplessness, as well as hopelessness, of their existence, with nothing ahead to break the monotony of their tread-mill life, became appalling to one who studied such cases.

That a deep and pungent work was going on in many hearts, through the power of the Holy Ghost, since Blue's meeting, and his sudden death, no one knew quite so well as did Mr. and Mrs. Hudson.

The warden recognized the fact that the gen-

eral behaviour was better than ever before in the history of the camp. and the young physician—Doctor Seaton bv name—felt convinced that a number of his patients who had heard Blue's testimony, and were afterwards transferred to the hospital, had been so impressed by the old man's experience, that, like himself, they were longing to master the secret of his happiness.

Glenn visited the hospital in company with Mrs. Hudson, which, as was usually the case, held many patients. One young man among them especially attracted his attention. His face was fair and almost effeminate in its delicacy, and there was nothing about him to stamp him as a criminal, with the exception of his prison garb.

At Mrs. Hudson's request Glenn gave the men a short talk, and then sang several hymns. As his voice was mellow and thoroughly trained, the music was a real treat to them, and was listened to with eager attention.

"Who was the young man on our right—the one whose fever was so high?" he inquired of Mrs. Hudson, as they returned to the cottage, where Agnes, seated on the little piazza, was awaiting them. She had not been quite so strong as usual the past few days, and Mr. Hudson had

prohibited her going to the hospital until she was recuperated.

"His history only adds another sad chapter to the long list of crimes due to alcohol," was Mrs. Hudson's reply. Then she added, passionately: "Oh! if boys would only learn never to tamper with the deadly stuff, what agony they would escape."

She was silent for a moment, and then continued: "The young man whom you noticed is of good parentage, and enjoys a fair education. He was completing the study of dentistry when he committtd the crime which brings him to the camp. Early in life he evinced a fondness for wine. This taste grew on him until its gratification proved his overthrow. One evening, in company with some kindred spirits, he drank, as he had sometimes done before, to intoxication. He became boisterous while on the street, and a policeman attempted to arrest him. He resisted, drew a pistol, and shot the officer in the breast. The man died the following day from the wound thus inflicted. So Charles Morgan—that is the convict's name—at the age of twenty and one-half years, with all his life before him, became guilty of murder, and is sentenced to the penitentiary for fifteen years. And the saddest part of the story to me is the fact that the boy has

no recollection whatever of shooting the officer. He was easily intoxicated, and when under the influence of alcohol would do things of which he afterwards had no remembrance."

"Which only furnishes another reason why he should never have touched the wine-cup," was Glenn's quick response. Then he added: "And how deadly this habit of carrying fire-arms is seen to be when studied from the grim vantage-ground of a convict camp. With God's help," and he seemed registering a vow as he spoke, "while you are engaged in the humane and sorely-needed mission of trying to save the souls of the poor fellows who are sent here, from eternal death, I now again pledge my time, my talents, my money, my life, to the effort to save all the boys whom I can reach, from ever coming to this tomb, wherein is engulfed every hope, so far as this life is concerned, of every man who receives his sentence to the penitentiary."

Agnes Hudson's eyes kindled as she heard these words.

"What a precious work you have chosen," she said, gently. "And how I shall pray our Father to enable you to influence and train an ever-increasing multitude of boys for his army. Yours is a more hopeful mission than ours," she continued, after a moment's silence, "for you

will take them in hand before open crime and disgrace have set their debasing and paralyzing seal upon them. Sometimes I am so weighed down by a feeling of the odds against which we are fighting, that I almost grow discouraged. It would be refreshing to give one's life toward helping boys and youths attain a noble manhood before they have become hardened, as the majority of those who come to us are hardened."

While she was speaking a boy was seen rapidly approaching the cottage.

"Whar be ther parson?" he asked, in an excited tone.

"He is in his room. Who wants him, Norton? This is his rest-hour," Mrs. Hudson answered, rising to her feet. Something in the boy's face and manner alarmed her.

"Thar's ben er accident down t' ther mines. Four fellers are kilt, an' ther new feller, Jake Kelley, air tored up orful. He's ben brung t' ther hosp'tal, an' he 'lows he wants ther parson ter come, quick. He cayn't live long, ther doctor 'lows."

Before the messenger had finished speaking, Mrs. Hudson had disappeared within the cottage. A minute later the missionary appeared at the door, hat in hand, and with an expression

of pain and dread marking his usually peaceful countenance, passed down the steps.

Glenn arose, saying: "May I go with you?" and Agnes added, "And I, too, papa?"

"No, daughter. Neither you nor your mother must visit the hospital unless I send for you. Mr. Hildegarde can come," and the two walked quickly away.

The injured convict was found to be so crushed, internally, that there was no chance for his recovery. "He will die in less than a half hour," Dr. Seaton whispered to Mr. Hudson. "I have done all I can for him. Given an opiate to ease his suffering a little. Now that you have come, I will go back to the mine, for there are others who need my attention."

The poor unfortunate was not over nineteen years of age. He seemed to be dozing from the effect of the opiate administered, as Mr. Hudson bent over him.

The minister raised a haggard face to Glenn as he said: "He is a new man. Has been here only two or three days. I have had no chance to talk with him, nor point him to Christ. And now it is too late."

The sound of his voice aroused the sufferer. He raised his glassy eyes to the sympathetic face above him, saying: "I hain't never had no chance—parson—nary chance a'tall. P'r'aps

God A'mighty knows this an' will be sort o' easy on me, 'cordin'ly."

His eyelids again closed before Mr. Hudson could utter a word. Both the missionary and Glenn were asking, out of full hearts, that the poor fellow might receive a saving glimpse of Christ before he was called away.

He aroused, a few moments later, with the death-rattle in his throat.

"O — God — be — merciful — to — me," he gasped, brokenly. "I's—full—o'—sin—ez—ye — knows. But — Lord — I's — sorry — an' — I — axes — ye — ter — please — fur-give. My — mother — I — 'minds — me prayed — fur — me — a — heap — 'fore — she — died. Hev — mercy — on — my — pore — soul — ef — ye — kin."

Mr. Hudson took one of his clammy hands within his own, and told him, in a few incisive sentences, of God's great love for him, through Jesus Christ, and his willingness to forgive and save him.

"I — allus — meant — to — do — right," he gasped. "He — knows — this — 'cause — he — knows — all — things. I — rode — on — the — keers — wi'out — any — money — frum — Louisville — to — Birmingham. I — did'n think — hit — ware — much — wrong —'cause — I — did'n — hev — no — money — an' — I

— coul'n — git — no — work. I — ware — comin' — to — Birmingham—" here he paused, exhausted. After resting a moment he continued: "I — ware — huntin' — work — when — they — kotched — up — wi' — me — an' — fined — me — an' — sont — me — here — 'cause — I — could'n — pay — the — fine."

Again his eyes closed. But after a brief interval they opened, and Mr. Hudson tried, afresh, to point him to Christ. He seemed to listen attentively for awhile, but suddenly cried out: "O — God — won't — ye — hev — mercy? Men's — been — mighty — hard — on — me — but — you's — diffrunt. Do — let — me — see — yore — Face — in — peace — ef — ye — kin."

Again the missionary told him, out of his full heart, of the great love of Christ, and once more the poor fellow broke out into supplication: "Lord — Jesus — Christ — the — parson — 'lows — ye — done — furgive — the — thief — on — the — cross — jis — at — the — las' — minnit. Cayn't — ye — furgive — me — too? No — one — kin — give — me — a — han' — now — 'cept — you. I'se — done — put — my — case — into — yore — keepin'. Furgive! — Hev — mercy!" He was silent for an instant, and Glenn thought his spirit had passed away. But he gave a gasp, opened his eyes and said, in a

stronger voice than he had yet used: "I trusts ye—Lord Jesus."

Those were his last words, and as he uttered them his soul drifted out into the great Beyond.[1]

" 'Those that call upon me shall be saved,' so our Father tells us," Mr. Hudson murmured, as he glanced up into Glenn's face. The eyes into which he looked were full of tears.

"God is faithful," the younger man responded, "and the mother's prayers cannot have been lost. I believe the poor fellow's last words prove that God enabled him to exercise saving faith in Christ just as he passed away."

"How pitiful it all is," he added, a moment later. "I wish those who think a man in the garb of a convict is beyond hope and beyond the need of help, might have stood where we have been this afternoon. If ever a poor fellow needs a true friend to encourage hope, and point out to him the way of salvation, it must be after the prison doors have closed behind him, and all earthly hope is gone; swallowed up in a disgrace that nothing, in the eyes of man, can ever obliterate."

"That is true. And the more guilty he is the more he needs such help," was Mr. Hudson's response. "If he is a criminal in the real sense of the word—as the majority of these men are—

[1] The convict's death and the cause of imprisonment are actual facts.

he not only has lost all hope when he comes here—but he is also weighed down by a sense of awful guilt. That many of the cases brought to these camps are undoubtedly hopeless ones—so far as their ever accepting Christ is concerned—I am willing to admit. Yet there are some among them, especially in the ranks of the younger men, who richly repay the time and labor expended. I would not exchange my work for any other field that could be offered me, for I believe I am more needed right here than anywhere else in the wide world."

The other wounded men were now brought in, but their injuries were slight, and after exchanging a few words with each one, Mr. Hudson and Glenn returned to the cottage.

As the latter boarded the train for home, the following morning, two thoughts were uppermost in his mind. One was—that the work of the missionaries and teachers, in these convict camps and in the penitentiaries, is among the most needed of any place on the globe.

The other was a query: Would Agnes Hudson ever be willing to exchange her present self-appointed mission for any other?

This question was propounded to his own heart, with wistful eyes and accelerated pulse-beats.

Glenn was in love.

CHAPTER XXII.

A Miniature Republic.

LONG and carefully did Glenn study out the plan and details for his school.

Once, a year or so previous to this date, he had read of an institution, located somewhere in the North, which fulfilled his idea of the best way to deal with boys of the class which he designed to help.

This school had been formed on the principle of a republic, the pupils electing their own officers and making and executing their own laws. This was the most that Glenn remembered about it. But with this idea as his central thought, he had gone forward maturing his plans with ever-increasing interest.

Keith, of course, shared in all his hopes, and to him Glenn had confided his seed thought of organizing a miniature republic. A day or two after he returned from his second visit to the convict camp, a letter from Keith gave him the address of the Principal of the northern school which had so aroused his interest. He at once made arrangements to visit this school, which was located at Freeville, New York.

He was most favorably impressed by a close inspection of this unique institution, and after lingering two days, returned home, there to perfect his own arrangements more fully, and translate into them the more striking features of the northern school.

He saw, however, that it was impracticable to put all his plans into execution the first year. The boys would have to be educated up by degrees to the point of adopting and living out in their daily lives these novel and advanced ideas.

The northern school ran without seeming friction, but it had been in active operation for several years. This little republic contained within itself all the departments of a complete government—legislative, judicial and executive—all the offices being filled by the pupils of the school, denominated "citizens." They made their own laws and executed them.

Glenn at once saw the advantages growing out of this system of conducting an institution of learning, for it not only taught the boys the functions of a republican form of government, but it also developed their honor and manliness in the enactment and execution of only such laws as they were willing should govern them.

So far as his sound common sense showed him was practicable, he intended to introduce many

of these ideas into his own school during the first year. But much was left to be engrafted on at a later period, after his influence over the pupils had been fully established and their capacities for self-government had been somewhat developed.

But one thing at the very outset was to be avoided: that of pauperizing the boys. The first lesson to be learned was that of self-dependence. They were to be taught at the beginning that neither Glenn nor their parents were to assume the cost of their education.

In order to develop this principle, he decided that every boy must be charged a fair price for board and tuition. And the ability to meet this cost was to be furnished him through work. All labor was to be paid for according to its true value, and this would be determined by the Principal and the superintendent of each department; payment to be made in the "coin of the realm"—aluminum currency, minted in all denominations from one cent up to one dollar; this to be the only money current in the republic. Even the youngest pupils were to be assigned little "chores" suited to their strength, and for such service they would receive suitable compensation.

It was also his determination, after long and

careful study, to make the institution self-sustaining. This would not be possible during the first year, but he felt sure—although the whole plan was experimental—that he could, in the end, work out his ideal. A self-supporting school was best for the boys, and best for all connected with the enterprise, and to this end he planned and labored. Until this was successfully accomplished, his own fortune, which was princely, was pledged to its support and development.

He did not intend to limit the benefits of the school to boys of any certain age. If any came too young to work, he would have a kindergarten department established for them. If young men desired to attend they should be welcome, and have a chance not only to secure an education, but to learn a useful trade at the same time.

The principal branch of industry taught was to be agriculture, Linwood's broad and fertile acres offering a fine field for the development of this sadly neglected but promising source of livelihood. Besides farming, Glenn had erected and furnished shops, where the trades of blacksmithing, wagon-making and carpentering, as well as shoe and harness-making, could be learned. In these various shops competent mechanics were employed as foremen; while on the

plantation educated farmers were secured to conduct all the departments of agriculture in an intelligent and profitable manner.

Every boy of competent age was to be allowed to choose the line of work he preferred to follow. And unless he showed himself incapable of becoming proficient in that particular occupation, he was not permitted to change to any other.

As Glenn did not intend to limit his work to the boys in the vicinity immediately around Linwood, he had extended notices of the school inserted in city and county papers throughout the State.

Local notices from pulpits, lecture halls, and school-rooms were also requested, and the result was that on October first, the "Linwood Republic" opened with twenty-five "citizens."

With Keith's assistance, and the aid of other influential and practical friends whose interest in the work had been secured, Glenn had been able to muster a full and competent corps of teachers, and everything pointed toward success.

The day was divided into the following hours: All "citizens" arose at six o'clock. Breakfast was served at six-thirty, followed by morning worship. From nine to twelve the time was devoted to study, with two brief intermissions of five

minutes each for change of position and relaxation. Dinner was served at twelve-fifteen. Three hours in the afternoon were given to manual labor, on the farm and in the shops. Supper at six. This was followed by evening worship. Glenn always conducted this service himself unless some ministerial friend was his guest, in which case the visitor was invited to lead it. From seven-thirty to eight-thirty some interesting chapel exercise, literary, musical or religious, was always held, much to the satisfaction of both the teachers and the "citizens." Nine o'clock was the time for retiring, and every pupil was required to be in bed at the ringing of the bell marking that hour.

The Republic soon elected a Legislature, and Saturday mornings were given to parliamentary debates — the "citizens" discussing, as they gained knowledge and confidence, simple political and State questions of public interest. And as the weeks went on, they were encouraged to frame, and discuss, and pass laws for the government of the Republic.

Saturday afternoon was a general holiday, in which the citizens were allowed to do as they pleased, only so that no law of the Republic was violated.

Mabel had voluntarily assumed the care of the

classes containing the younger pupils of the school, and great was her interest in the work.

Crates Welldon had, at first, expressed dissatisfaction that she was not to have charge of any of his studies; but she soon won him to her view of the matter, and at the same time enlisted him as her general assistant by saying: "Why, Citizen Welldon, I expect you to help me teach, rather than I teach you."

The "citizen's" eyes opened wide at these unexpected words.

"I don' b'leeve I knows jis what yer said," he remarked at last, much puzzled and somewhat confused.

"Don't you? Well, I will try and make my meaning clear to you. You know you are such a large 'citizen' that the smaller pupils all look upon you as being almost a man, and they will think whatever you do is just the right thing. Now, I expect you to be such an obedient, industrious citizen of the Republic, always wearing a cheerful face and careful to act as a gentleman on every occasion, that I can say to the small citizens: 'Look at Citizen Welldon. He is just the kind of a boy I want you to be.' Don't you see how you will be teaching the little fellows by your example, as I shall by my words?"

That was a blissful moment for "Citizen Well-

don." He blushed with pleasure, and as he straightened himself to his full height he replied: "Sho', Miss Mabel, I'll help ye all I kin. An' ef yer sees me er doin' anythin' yer 'lows er gen'leman ortent ter, yer mus' be sho' an' tell me. I does think er heap o' yer and Mister Hildegarde, an' I wants ter be jis' what you-uns wants me ter be."

"I surely will. And one of the first things I want to do is to help you use choice language. Now, 'you-uns' and 'we-uns' sounds all right to you, but just notice if you ever hear Mr. Hildegarde speak thus. Leave off the 'uns,' and it will be all right. Instead of saying, as you did just now, 'I want to be just what you-uns wants me to be,' put it this way, 'I want to be just what you want me to be.' Do you see the difference?"

"Citizen Welldon" looked puzzled, and Mabel continued: "I am anxious to teach the younger boys as quickly as possible to speak correctly, and if you will learn to talk as you hear Mr. Hildegarde, you can greatly assist me."

From that hour no one ever again heard Citizen Welldon make use of the amusing localisms, "we-uns" and "you-uns." Indeed, his effort to follow Mabel's suggestion was so untiring that in less than three months time a very noticeable change was apparent in his dialect, and he soon

became one of the model citizens of the Republic.

Just before Mabel entered upon her school duties, the mail one morning brought to her a daintily illuminated booklet containing Rudyard Kipling's poem, "Recessional." It was an exquisitely gotten-up volume, and her pleasure in it was extreme. Kelso Keith's name was on the fly-leaf, and a few days later there came a letter from him, the first he had ever written her.

Her cheeks were pink with pleasure as she perused its closely-filled pages.

"I have wanted to chat with you on paper for weeks," he said, "but have not quite had the courage to begin a correspondence until now, as I had not first prepared the way by obtaining your consent to such a procedure.

"But now I plunge boldly in, and write exactly as I would talk were I by your side. If your life is too full to admit of a reply, or if you do not care to enter into a correspondence, just lay this letter aside, and do not feel burdened to answer it."

He wrote about many things, touching more fully on spiritual themes than any others. Toward the close he said, evidently being in a retrospective mood:

"It would be delightful to be with you, these

perfect days, out on the bluffs. The golden-rod must be in full bloom now, and Golden-rod Slope, no doubt, is bright with that most winsome flower. I can feel the breeze—as I write—blowing up from the ravine, and see the sunny, rocky slope covered with the long-stemmed, gracefully-waving blossoms. And off yonder, through the rift in the trees, I see the great valley stretching away, meadow and field and wood, to where the invisible river winds across, indicated, yet hidden, by its wide-flanking bodyguard of immense poplars, oaks and hickories—all its own children—that accompany it in all its windings and wanderings. And I can follow it as it stretches away through the blue haze of the valley, almost to the horizon's edge—then lost for a time in the darker blue, which for us means earthly distance, just as the brighter, clearer blue above, means heavenly distance. And then, just as I seem to have bidden it farewell—it bends eastward and again seeks the overshadowing mountain's base, on the opposite side of the long valley whence it first issued forth—and—well—as I watch it, I wish I might see it in reality.

"And as I dreamily wish this, I seem once more to look upon an earnest face by my side, on which wee Lassie's Elder Brother has set his seal, and in whose soul his transforming life has

entered. And I am wondering what the present experience of this soul may be, and how far she has penetrated into the hallowed whiteness of our Lord's mystical and matchless Presence."

As Mabel read these words she paused, and covered her face with her hands. She was reviewing her life since the hour alluded to in the letter, and the retrospection was both joyful and sad. The old caressing motion, grown to be an involuntary one, of placing her hand upon her little silver pin, was again noticeable as she whispered: "I am His and He is mine. That is all I know, except that I am very slow to learn His precious secrets, and that He is always tender and patient toward me."

This letter of Keith's proved a fresh incentive to her as she entered upon her self-appointed duties in the school-room, and when she at length answered it, after the "Republic" was organized and had been running smoothly for almost one month, the reply was all that a friend, as interested as he, could desire.

CHAPTER XXIII.

An Eagle's Nest.

WINTER came, and with it the school increased in numbers until seventy-five names had been registered as citizens of the Republic. The fame of the unique institution began to spread as soon as it was opened, and the delight of the pupils "in governin' ourselves," as they expressed it, was noised abroad, until Glenn was kept busy answering the many letters of inquiry which came to him.

Some of these letters were pathetic, and others were amusing. Their reception convinced Glenn of one thing: that there was a large body of boys and young men throughout the Southland, belonging to the poorer and illiterate classes, that were eager to obtain an education if it could be accomplished in a way that would preserve to each one his independence, and also insure him a home and a support while being educated.

As this was exactly what the Linwood Miniature Republic offered, he was able to answer the many questions propounded to him through the mail in so satisfactory a manner that, judging

from the answers sent in before the first winter ended, the second year promised to number more students than he had dared hope, in his most sanguine mood, would be the case.

A gymnasium had been added to the equipment of the school during the fall, and also a large wood-yard. During the inclement days of winter those boys whose usual occupation out-of-doors was interrupted by bad weather, were thus enabled to earn needful wages by sawing and splitting wood. The gymnasium offered pleasing and healthful recreation on Saturday afternoons, and many of the boys found time on other days to engage in its muscle-developing exercises.

Husking corn, of which the Linwood acres afforded a large harvest, was another occupation for the winter.

Glenn was delighted to note that even the youngest of the "citizens," after being in the Republic for a brief time, learned to dispatch their work with a cheerfulness that was refreshing. And when pay-day came it was interesting to see the pride exhibited in face and demeanor as the wages were received. And later—as each citizen asked for and paid his weekly bills for board and laundry—the air of importance manifested was both amusing and impressive.

Many a lad, who, during his former life had

been noted for his lazy and shiftless habits, under the stimulus of the new atmosphere of the Republic, developed into a cheerful and painstaking worker.

Of course there were some exceptions, and on these cases Glenn bestowed much thought before a mode of correction was devised which met his approval. He had decided—at the outset—that no corporal punishment should be inflicted. His whole thought was how best to develop the manliness of the boys, and he did not believe that the infliction of physical pain would further this object.

His expedient for reaching refractory pupils was unique. If a boy would not learn his lessons, or if he refused to work in a satisfactory manner, or violated the laws of the Republic, after he had been duly admonished without manifest improvement, he was simply excluded from the dining-room. If he chose, he could return home. Or, if he preferred, he could remain quietly on the grounds, but on no consideration could he receive food until he had asked the Principal's pardon for his misbehavior, and promised amendment for the future.

Thus far this rule had worked well, and the few boys who were inclined to show a refractory spirit were soon brought into a state of obedience

and docility. The whole tone of the school was in favor of manly, upright conduct, and the boy who evinced a contrary tendency was soon made to feel that he was under the ban of his "fellow-citizens" and the object of such universal contempt that he was either forced to leave the Republic in self-defence or amend his ways.

Mabel's magnetic personality was potent and far-reaching, and in her presence in the school, and influence over the boys, Glenn found he possessed one of his most powerful incentives to noble living. She threw herself with such whole-hearted enthusiasm into the work that, before the winter waned, her brother had to caution her lest she should unduly tax her strength and undermine her health.

One sunny Saturday afternoon in early spring, when birds were filling the air with their songs, and cozy nests were being built in almost every sheltered tree and wayside bush, Citizen Welldon asked permission to go to a certain bluff with which he was familiar, in search of eagles' eggs. Citizen Allen elected to accompany him, and as they were now both trustworthy "citizens," the request was granted.

Greatly to the surprise of his parents, Jim had entered the Republic as one of its earliest pupils. He was such a "hard case," as Crates had truth-

fully described him at the time of the birthday féte, that all his relatives were thunder-struck when they found out his intentions.

"He'll not stay thar mor'n er week," his mother prophesied. "Either he'll git sick o' ther hull business, ur he'll be turnt out fur his meanness."

But some spark of manliness, hidden deep down in his nature under the rubbish of evil habits, had been touched and quickened into faint life at the birthday dinner, and this had awakened in him a desire to become "er plumb hon'able feller, sich ez Mister Hildegarde be, an' t'other chap—Keith they called him—air."

This confession was made to little Joe one night after the boys had retired. The younger brother was drowsy, and sleepily responded: "Yer'll hev ter quit cussin' an' lyin', then, an' throw yer terbacker away. Sich gents ez they be don't do nuthin' o' thet kind."

Jim heroically made up his mind to pay the required price, and when he entered the school it was with a fixed resolve to become "er plumb hon'able gen'leman, sich ez Mister Hildegarde be. Sich ez 'ull mek folks 'spect yer, an' sort o' look up ter yer."

With this frame of mind possessing him, he and Crates struck up quite a friendship, and

together they strove against fixed habits of evil, and aided each other not a little in the fight by words of cheer given back and forth, as occasion demanded, when the warfare grew fierce.

Eagles, the kind found in Tennessee and Northern Alabama, are especially destructive on poultry; and Glenn told the boys he would pay them well for all the eggs they would capture.

They set out blithely, carrying a basket to receive the eggs, and a stout rope by which they were to climb down to the nest, for the special haunt of the pair of eagles Crates had in view was down a precipitous bluff, so dangerous to reach, that, had Glenn known of its location, would have insured his veto on the trip.

But the danger involved only rendered it all the more fascinating to the boys, and they were in high spirits when the spot was reached.

Crates descended first. He had taken the precaution to tie a knot about every two feet in the rope, that a more secure "hold" might be afforded them when the ascent was made. These "hill" boys, as they are termed in Alabama, were skilled in feats of climbing, and their winter in the gymnasium had greatly added to their physical expertness and powers of endurance.

The rope was securely fastened to the trunk of a tree that stood on the edge of the bluff. The

shelf on which the nest was built was some twenty-five or thirty feet from the brow of the cliff, and the descent to it was down a sheer precipice.

Jim looked rather grave as he saw his friend seize the rope and step to the edge. They had waited until they were sure the birds were gone, for neither boy cared to encounter an enraged eagle robbed of her eggs; howbeit, the size of the bird was much smaller than those found in many other localities.

Crates made the descent in safety, and called cheerily back: "Good luck. Thar's a nest plumb full. An' the ole birds air nowhar in sight."

The alleged number of eggs was rather a strain on his imagination, but he was so excited that he forgot, for the moment, his "choice language," in which Mabel was so carefully drilling him, as well as his veracity.

Jim cautiously lowered the basket, and much sport was gained for the boys by this feat. The wind was blowing smartly, and the light basket swayed about at so lively a rate that Crates at last secured it amid much laughter and many jests. He experienced a distinct feeling of trepidation, however, while trying to grasp it, as the narrowness of the ledge on which he stood rendered his attempts in this direction rather hazardous.

But he was careful to conceal this fact from Jim, who, at a safe distance, only saw in the lively swinging about of the basket and his comrades many ineffectual attempts to capture it, something to laugh over.

When Crates at last caught and unfastened it, Jim seized the rope, and, being of lighter weight than his companion, slid easily down, landing by his friend's side in triumph, and exclaiming, as his feet rested on the solid rock: "Sakes! Would'n we be in er fix ef one or t'other should drap to ther bottom? The one what wuz left would'n go arter him, sartin."

"But who is goin' down thar? I hain't, nuther air you. We's come here fur eggs, an' I reckon we'll hev 'nuff to do to git 'em, an' then speer 'round a bit to see what else air a-campin' onto this rock, 'sides eagles," was Crates' rejoinder, delivered with considerable affectation of scorn.

The eggs were taken from the nest and safely deposited in the basket, and then, as Crates had suggested, the boys began cautiously to look about them.

The ledge or shelf of rocks on which they stood, ran along the bluff for quite a distance, sometimes growing more narrow and then broadening out several feet beyond its width at the point where the nest was located. It offered

them a hazardous but fascinating occupation for the next hour to explore this ledge.

Crates was delighted to find some fine specimens of maiden-hair fern growing far back in a sheltered crevice. These he carefully transferred to the basket, placing them over the eggs. He knew Mabel would be greatly pleased with them, for it was yet early for ferns, and only the sheltered place where these were found would explain their beauty and size at this date.

"Reckon we better be a-goin'," Jim at last suggested. "Them eagles may git back any time now, an' I ruther not meet 'em ef I kin help it."

Crates assented, and they wended their way back to the spot where they had descended. The rope was swinging merrily in the wind, and Jim, who was the more nimble of the two, offered to capture it. To this Crates offered no objections, and for a few moments he watched Jim's vain attempts to secure it with a smiling face. But he suddenly grew serious and cast his eyes swiftly to the top of the bluff. What he discovered by that critical glance caused him to say, very gravely:

"Jim, we's in a purty fix. That rope swings off further'n you kin reach it, 'cause the rocks on top thar leans out jis' a leetle beyont

what this yere shelf duz what we's standin' on. That's what made it so hard fur me to git the basket. I wuz a plumb fool not to hev seed it then. But I 'lowed it wuz on'y the wind a-blowin' so hard what done it; an' stead o' thet hit ware the wind what blowed hit and made hit swing in so's I could git hold o' it at last."

Crates' view of the situation proved to be correct. For a half-hour they tried in vain to reach the rope. The wind was blowing it away from the shelf, and there was not weight enough in it to bring it in so that it would swing back sufficiently near for them to grasp it.

"Wal, we's in a fix, sho'. Hit 'pears like we's got ter stay down here all night," Crates said at last. His dismay was so great that he had insensibly glided back into his native vernacular, even to "hit," the use of which Mabel had labored so hard to correct in him.

"Some o' ther boys ur teachers 'll come arter us in the mornin', when they finds we aint in," Jim rejoined. "I tolt Jack Sykes an' Abe Brown 'zackly whar we wuz boun' fur, so they'll know jis' whar ter come ter look fur us."

Then he added, after a moment's reflection, and after he had taken a lengthened survey of the blue vault above them: "I's goin' ter put them eggs back inter the nest 'fore them ole

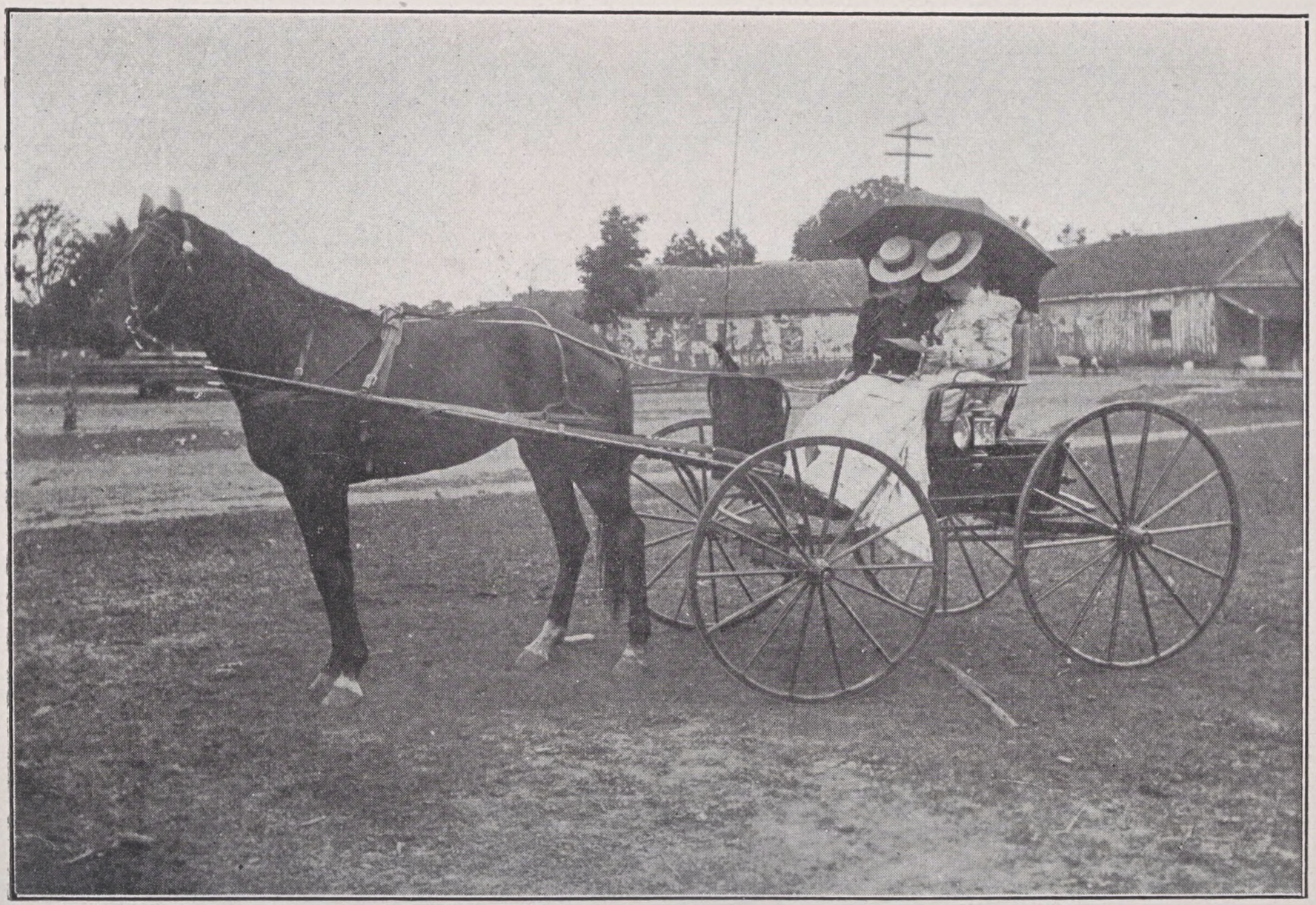
eagles comes. Mebbe they won't never 'spicion thet we totched 'em, an' won't bother us ef they sees ther nest an' ther eggs is thar all right."

He quickly carried his thought into execution, arranging the nest as nearly as possible as it had been before it was robbed. Crates watched him without speaking. He was wondering how they could possibly spend the night on the narrow ledge without tumbling off.

About sunset the eagles came home. Great was their distress when they observed the strange figures so near their nest, for, although they had crept as far away as the narrow ledge would permit, the visitors were still too close to suit their inhospitable neighbors. Their wild cries and close circlings about them kept the boys on their guard, but the fierce birds did not offer to attack them. As darkness settled down they became more quiet, and at last flew into the sheltered alcove where the nest was hidden away.

"I say, Jim, ef I on'y hed er rope, I'd tie yer fas' ter this yere rock, what looks like hit mought be er hitchin' post fur night-mars ter hitch ter," Crates announced, before it became so dark as to hide their surroundings from view.

His tone was cheery, almost mirthful. He saw that his companion was decidedly nervous and he wanted to raise his spirits.



—— "*Together they smiled over the letter.*"

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"What 'ud yer want ter tie me fast fur? I ain't er goin' ter run away. Not much. Wisht I mought," was Jim's reply.

"But yer see, Jim, I knows yer sometimes gits up in yer sleep, 'cause we bunks together. An' 'twouldn't be nuthin' to larf at ef yer got ter rampagin' 'round yere ter-night. Ef I could on'y tie yer up snug an' tight, ther pullin' o' ther rope would wake yer up 'fore yer could tumble off," was Crates' explanatory answer.

This means of providing for his chum's safety being out of his reach, he at last decided to place Jim close up to the face of the bluff, while he himself sat by his side, next to the precipice.

'S'posin' yer should git ter rollin' in ther night ez yer sometimes rolls at home. Yer'd go to ther bottom, sho'," Jim objected, when the plan was made known to him.

"Shucks! I ain't er goin' ter sleep none. I shan't even lay down," was Crates' rejoinder. Then he added, solemnly: "An' I's er-goin' ter ax God ter look arter us all night. Ef he don't we'll be in er bad fix, sartin'."

We need not linger over the long night hours, nor over Crates' heroic efforts to keep awake. He sat as close to Jim as he could possibly get, and kept his hand resting on him the entire night. He had mentally constituted himself his

chum's protector and guardian, and this thought gave him such a feeling of importance that it aided him not a little in fighting off his tendency to sleep. But toward morning his eyes closed in spite of all his efforts to keep them open, and for several hours he slept soundly, with his body leaning over against his friend and his head drooping forward until it rested on Jim's shoulder.

At daylight both boys aroused, and Jim forlornly complained: "I's mos' froze stiff. An' I aches all over."

Crates tried to divert him by drawing his attention to the glories of the approaching sunrise, and while doing this the sound of voices caught their ear.

"Hit's Mister Hildegarde. He's done come ter hunt us up," Jim cried, joyfully. Then he sent out a prolonged "whoop," in which Crates joined; and in a few minutes Glenn stood on the brow of the cliff above them, peering down. Two of the teachers were with him, and several of the boys.

CHAPTER XXIV.

Advancing.

"ARE you hurt?" Glenn inquired, anxiously.

"No, sir. We's all right, 'ceptin' we hain't washed for breakfast?" Crates rejoined. "Hez the bell rung yit?"

Glenn smiled, much relieved to find them safe and in so facetious a mood.

"But you must surely be rather stiff after a night spent on those rocks. My sister is greatly troubled about you, Crates. She is sure you are at the bottom of the precipice."

He saw at once why the rope had swung beyond the reach of the young egg-hunters, and soon had it drawn up to the top of the cliff. He fastened to it a small but widely-spreading branch cut from a bush near by, and when this was lowered the boys easily caught one of the projecting twigs and secured the rope.

"Wait a moment. I am not going to risk your lives by permitting you to climb the rope until I have got another rope fastened under your arms," he exclaimed, as he saw Jim make a move as though to ascend at once.

The second rope was soon lowered, in the end of which was a noose.

"Now, Crates, carefully slip this noose under your arms, and then you can come up in safety. Should you lose your grip we could haul you up without difficulty," Glenn said, looking earnestly into the boy's face.

He saw, in spite of his cheeriness, that Crates was quite pallid, and he was anxious to get him to the top of the bluff as speedily as possible. Thanks to his long night's sleep, Jim looked as ruddy as usual, while his chum appeared decidedly the worse for his adventure. For this reason Glenn felt he should be the first to be rescued.

But Crates was of a different opinion, as his words indicated: "You mus' take Jim up fust, Mister Hildegarde. He's wuss off 'n I be, fur he's a-akin' all over."

"Bless the boy. If that is not loving his neighbor better than he loves himself, then I can't read actions aright," was Glenn's thought, as he waited for the noose to be adjusted under Jim's arms.

He had placed this rope over a smooth limb of the same tree to which the boys had fastened their rope when they made the descent. The two teachers held the end of the rope, assisted

by the interested pupils who were with them. In case the ascending boy lost his grip, the rescuers would be able to draw him to the top of the cliff without trouble, the smooth limb of the tree serving as a rude pulley.

Crates watched his comrade make the ascent in safety, and then turned to get his basket of ferns. As he did so an idea struck him with such force that he exclaimed, aloud: "I'll do it, sho'."

Then he began to arrange his ferns in the basket in such a way as to leave room on one side for something he evidently meant should occupy the space thus cleared.

He then proceeded to turn his coat-collar up, close about his throat. Then he drew his hat down over his brow, placed his handkerchief about it so as to cover his ears, and tied the ends of the handkerchief under his chin. He presented a most ludicrous appearance when thus attired, but he gave scant heed to this thought.

"I cumed fur eggs, an' I's goin' to have 'em," he muttered, as he cautiously advanced along the rocky ledge toward the niche where the nest was located. As he neared the spot the eagles, evidently on the alert, arose in the air and circled about him, uttering cries of alarm and distress.

Pulling his hat still lower over his eyes, he

made a dash for the nest. He expected to feel the birds, with beak and claw, tearing at his head and back. But nothing of the kind occurred. He secured the eggs and returned to the spot where the rope was now dangling—with another bushy bough attached to it—with no further notice from the eagles than a continuation of their cries of distress.

"That's funny, sho'," he thought, as he reached for the rope and hastened to fasten the basket, with its precious burden of eggs, securely to the end, "I 'lowed from what I hev heered they would hev fit me awful. But I's plumb glad they had on ther comp'ny manners, for onct."

"Now ye kin pull her up," he said to the expectant group above. "Handle her keerful," he admonished, "fur thar's eggs in her."

The basket was landed in safety, and Crates speedily followed. Teachers and schoolmates welcomed him with much warmth, and Glenn said: "Had I known the dangerous place where your eagles had chosen to build, I would not have given my consent to your making the trip. But 'all's well that ends wel,' so we will not spend any useless regrets over the adventure. Only let it teach you more care in the future."

Considerable amusement was occasioned by Crates fantastic adjustment of collar, hat, and

handkerchief, which he had not altered since capturing the eggs.

"I 'lowed the pesky eagles would hev fit me bad, an' I wanted to git kivered up all I could," he explained, joining in the laugh. "But they never tried to hurt me a bit," he added.

"That is because the eggs had not hatched. Had there been eaglets instead of eggs in the nest, you would have had a lively time," Glenn said, as they started homeward.

A little ripple of excitement flowed through the school over the adventure of the young egg-hunters, but this soon passed away with no further result than to give Crates a prestige he had not before enjoyed. This came to him because Jim loudly proclaimed the fact that his chum was "brave enough to mek an' out an' out gineral," adding: "I ware skeered mos' ter death, when I foun' we hed ter stay down on them rocks all night. But Crates, he jis' laughed and joked ez easy ez yer please, an' he staid 'wake mos' all night ter watch me, so's I should'n git up in my sleep an' fall off'n ther rocks. Crates air all right, he air, an' I don' wonder Miss Mabel and Mister Hildegarde thinks er heap o' him."

One day, some weeks after the adventure, Mabel found an opportunity to have a long talk with Crates when he was alone.

She drew his attention to the pin she wore, and told him something of what it signified to her. Then she said: "You seem to be trying so hard, Crates, to do right, that I am anxious for you to surrender your whole heart and life to Jesus. He can take you and make you just the boy he wants you to be."

To her surprise his eyes suddenly filled with tears. For a moment he was silent. As soon as he could command his emotion he said: "I's been tryin' to be jis' what I 'lowed he wanted me to be. But it don' seem no use. I's mean an' hateful jis' the the same, 'pears to me, ez before I begun tryin'."

Very simply and earnestly she explained to him where his trouble was, ending with the words: "He promises in his Word to give you a new heart and a new spirit. When you realize that your natural heart is so bad that it can't be mended, and will go to him for a new one—all soft and tender with his love—you will be a different boy. I have brought a letter, Crates, that I want to read to you. There are seven of them—one for each day in the week. I would like to read you this one to-day, another to-morrow, and so on, until you have heard them all. They are very helpful letters, written by a man who loves boys, and who wants to help them find Jesus, and give their whole lives to him."

Crates expressed a desire to hear the letter, and listened attentively while she read it. She went through it slowly, taking time to explain what she thought he might not understand, and going over some portions several times. When she had finished it she said: "Now let us kneel together, Crates, and ask Jesus to help you understand the truths that are in this letter, and show you just how to give your heart to him."

He dropped on his knees at once, and Mabel, for the first time in her life, prayed aloud. Her prayer was a very simple, but a deeply earnest one. At its conclusion she said: "Now pray for yourself, Crates. You need not talk to Jesus aloud, but just ask him, down in your heart, for what you feel you need."

There was absolute silence for a moment, and then she heard him whispering his petition in so earnest a manner that she felt sure he was really seeking to know Christ as he had never yet known him.

Every day, after that, she read another one of the letters to him, and each one seemed to impress him more deeply than the former one. When they were all finished he said: "I's ready to send for the badge, as ye calls it. I kin write 'nough now, so I kin sign my name good to the paper. I's sho' goin' to 'deavor to be a plumb Christian."

"You understand just what the pledge requires you to do?" Mabel inquired.

"I's to try, with God's help, to live 'zackly as I 'bleeves he wants me to. An' I's to read the Bible every day, an' go to church reg'lar. I's doin' it all now, as best I kin, so I feels ready to sign the pledge an' jine the band."

Great was his anxiety until the pin came. He did not speak of having sent for it to any of the boys but Jim, for something in his heart told him it must not be lightly or carelessly talked about. To Jim, who was his room-mate, he at last unbosomed himself quite freely.

"I shall wait till I kin read the letters Miss Mabel read to ye, an' the pledge fur myself," Jim said. "An' I kin do it by nex term, mebbe, cos I's l'arnin' to read mighty fast, Miss Mabel says."

When at last he saw the pin on the lapel of his chum's coat, and read the initials, "C. E.," on it, he looked very solemn.

"I's goin' to be able to read them letters by nex' term, sho'." he announced. "An' I's goin' to send fur 'em now, so's to sort o' 'courage myself, ye know."

And he did send for them the next day, getting the address from Mabel. They were letters issued in dainty form by a noted Christian Endeavor worker, who was a friend of Keith's.

CHAPTER XXV.

Comrades.

KEITH and Mabel, after the ice was once broken, kept up a regular correspondence. Both led such busy lives, however, that the letters were not so frequently exchanged between them as Keith could have desired might be the case.

The first school year in Linwood Republic rolled rapidly past, and early the following September, when the second year had opened with a fuller roll-call of pupils than even Glenn, who had anticipated a large school, had expected, Keith made them a flying visit.

His stay was brief, for business pressed him, but he remained quite long enough to grow enthusiastic over the Republic, and over the results that he could see were being wrought in the lives and character of the pupils.

He was especially pleased with the change he noted in Crates.

"He really looks like a different person," he said to Mabel, the day after he reached the Hall.

"I never supposed it possible such a sullen-looking boy could, in so brief a period, develop into the bright-faced, polite youth he now is."

Much pleased, Mabel responded: "Yes, we are delighted with the way he is developing. If nothing else had been accomplished but the change we see in him, Glenn and I would feel repaid for all that we have done. I believe the boy is a true Christian, and his influence over the younger pupils is most helpful."

"But you—you are looking less strong than when I last saw you," Keith suddenly remarked, scanning her face so intently that a wave of color dyed her cheek.

"You must be careful not to over-tax yourself," he added gently. "Your nature is so enthusiastic that you might easily injure yourself before you were aware of danger."

She smilingly assured him that she was in perfect health, and was enjoying her work intensely.

"For the first time in my life," she said, happily. "I feel that I am engaged in work that he—my Elder Brother—is pleased with. I suppose you can hardly understand what this means to me, for you have been so constantly doing his work; for so many years have had your heart and hands crowded with plans and labors for

him, that it has become your very life. But with me it is different. This school-work is my first taste of real service, and it means more to me than I can make you understand."

He smiled into her face with an expression of approval she had learned to prize, but only said: "Come, sit in this window and let me read you something. I ran across a gem, the other day, in the shape of this little book, and I brought it along for you. I used to read these poems in German, some years ago, but I never saw this translation until recently. The poems are by Gerhardt Ter Stergen. I think you once told me you did not read German?"

"No, I never thought I should like it."

"And have you never read any translation of Ter Stergen's songs of praise?"

She shook her head, and well-satisfied, he said: "I am selfish enough to be glad, for now I know I have brought you a mine of wealth. Listen: You say I have been full of work for God, and it is true. But this saint, who lived away back in the dark ages, had mastered something that I am only beginning to grope after."

Mabel settled herself comfortably on the wide window ledge, and Keith stood beside her with a flood of autumnal sunshine falling about him while he read:

"God's Rest.

"Oft comes to me the blessed hour,
A wondrous hour and still,
With empty hands I lay me down
No more to work or will.
An hour when weary thought has ceased;
The eyes are closed in rest,
And hushed in heaven's untroubled peace
I lean upon thy breast.

"There lie my books—for all I sought
My heart possesses now;—
The words are sweet that tell thy love,
But Love itself art thou.
One line I read, and then no more;
I close the book to see
No more the symbol and the sign,
But Christ revealed in me.

"And thus my worship is delight;
My work, to see thy face—
With folded hands and silent lips—
Within thy holy place.
Thus oft to busy men I seem
A cumberer of the soil,
The dreamer of an empty dream,
Whilst others delve and toil.

"I sit, an infant at thy feet,
Where moments teach me more
Than all the toil and all the books
Of all the ages hoar.
I sought the truth and found but doubt;
I wandered far abroad;
I hail the truth I now have found
Deep in the heart of God."

Keith's eyes glowed with joyful emotion as he raised them to meet an answering glance from Mabel.

"You see the thought," he said, pleased with her appreciation. "When I can say, with our poet, that all my busy plans for God are laid aside, and that:

> " 'I sit, an infant at his feet,
> Where moments teach me more
> Than all the toil and all the books
> Of all the ages hoar,'

and again where the same thought is repeated when he says:

> " 'And thus my worship is delight;
> My work—to see thy face
> With folded hands and silent lips—
> Within thy holy place,'

I shall, perhaps, be where he can really accomplish something through me. For, after all, it is what he can do through us, and not what we can do for him, that really counts."

"Yes, I know. I came across that thought in an article I was reading the other day. It said that it means far more for one to be so absolutely yielded to God that he can use us to accomplish his plans through us, than for us to get his help in accomplishing our own plans for him," Mabel rejoined, with thoughtful eyes lifted to Keith.

"I am glad this precious but elusive and unpopular truth has been brought to your attention. It will repay earnest investigation. So will the poem I have just read. But here is another. It sets my pulses leaping as the sound of martial music used to do when I was a chap. It is called by our poet:

'The Pilgrim Song,'

and is based on the thought of God having led his people of old through the dangers of the wilderness by the pillar of cloud by day, and the pillar of fire by night, which was to them merely the visible sign of his Presence among them."

As he spoke Keith again turned to the little volume he held in his hand and began to read:

"Come, children, on and forward!
With us the Father goes;
He leads us and he guards us
Through thousands of our foes.
The sweetness and the glory,
The sunlight of his eyes
Make all the desert places
To glow as paradise.

"Lo! through the pathless midnight,
The fiery pillar leads,
And onward goes the Shepherd
Before the flock he feeds.
Unquestioning, unfearing,
The lambs may follow on
In quietness and confidence,
Their eyes on him alone.

"Come, children, on and forward!
We journey hand in hand,
And each shall cheer his brother
All through the stranger land.
And hosts of God's high angels
Beside us walk in white;
What wonder if our singing,
Makes music through the night?"

"Come, children, on and forward!
Each moment nearer home;
The pilgrim days speed onward,
And soon the last will come.
All hail, O golden city!
How near the shining towers;
Fair gleams our Father's palace,
That radiant home of ours.

"On! Dare and suffer all things!
Yet, but a stretch of road—
Then, wondrous words of welcome,
And then—the face of God.
The world, how small and empty!
Our eyes have looked on HIM;
The mighty Sun has risen,
The taper burneth dim.

"Far, through the depths of heaven,
Our Jesus leads his own,
The mighty One, the lovely One,
Christ ever, Christ alone.
Led captive by his sweetness,
And dowered with his bliss,
Forever he is ours;
Forever we are his."

As Keith ended his reading and closed the volume, an eloquent hush brooded over the two

friends. Neither felt disposed to break it for some moments. Mabel's eyes were dewy with deep feeling, seeing which Keith at length said:

"If I were not afraid of wearying you I would venture to read a few more stanzas from a companion poem which bears the same title—'A PILGRIM SONG.' To me, who am consciously in the heat and stress of the battle, it is even more beautiful and inspiring than the other."

"I shall be glad to hear it. I could never weary listening to such helpful lines," was Mabel's low answer. So Keith again opened his little book and began:

"On, O beloved children!
The evening is at hand,
And desolate and fearful
Spreads out the dreary land.
But children, on to glory,—
With every face set fast
To reach the golden city
Where we shall rest at last.

"It was with voice of singing
We left the land of night
To pass, in joyful music,
Far onward, out of sight.
O children! would ye sorrow?
Though thousand worlds be lost,
OUR EYES HAVE LOOKED ON JESUS,
And thus we count the cost.

* * * * * *

"Across the will of nature
Leads on the path of God,
Not where the flesh delighteth
The feet of Jesus trod.
O bliss! to leave behind us
The fetters of the slave,
To leave *ourselves* behind us,
The grave clothes and the grave!

"To speed, unburdened pilgrims,
Glad, empty-handed, free;
To cross the trackless deserts,
And walk upon the sea.
As strangers among strangers,
No home beneath the sun;
How soon the wanderings ended,
The endless rest begun!

"We pass the children playing,
For evening shades fall fast;
We pass the wayside flowers,
God's paradise, at last.
If now the path be narrow,
And steep, and rough, and lone,
If crags and tangles cross it,
Praise God! we will go on.

"We follow in his footsteps;
What if our feet be torn?
Where he has marked the pathway
ALL HAIL THE BRIAR AND THORN!
Scarce seen, scarce heard, unreckoned;
Despised, defamed, unknown,
Or heard but by our SINGING;
On, children! Ever on!"

As he ceased reading another silence fell over them, which lasted many minutes. Each heart was busy with its own thoughts, suggested by the

pregnant lines just read. At last Mabel broke it by saying: "Unlike you, I enjoyed the first one of the 'Pilgrim Songs,' better than the last. It has a ring, a fire, that appeals to me as the other does not."

Keith smiled. "That is not strange. You have not yet reached the point in the onward march where the way is "steep and rough and lone." I have gotten where I must often repeat these words, making them my very own:

"'I follow in his footsteps;
What though my feet be torn?
Where he has marked the pathway,
All hail the briar and thorn!'"

Mabel looked questioningly and with silent sympathy into his face, seeing which he laughed and added:

"No, no. I am in no particular need of your commiseration. But I am peculiarly alone in the world. I have no 'kith nor kin,' to my knowledge, on this side of the ocean, and only distant relatives in England. And my work on the editorial staff of a great religious weekly brings me, at times, because of my settled convictions of right and wrong on many points where my associates differ, in direct conflict with them. There have been numerous occasions when I knew, if my protests were not heeded, I would be forced to withdraw from the paper,

for I dare not give my assent nor my influence to the least thing my Elder Brother shows me he cannot place his seal upon."

"I can understand that, very fully," Mabel said, evincing so much interest that Keith continued:

"And my work among the news-boys and boot-blacks has brought considerable censure upon me, and much opposition. My associates think I am giving too much time to them, and want me to place the mission in the hands of some minister of the gospel. They are inclined to send me out, especially of late, into the field as the travelling correspondent, more frequently than was ever thought of until this mission question came between us. They seem determined to separate me entirely from this work, which is the nearest to my heart and about the most important service, in my own estimation, in which I am engaged.

Keith paused a moment, but Mabel encouraged him to continue by saying: "I am deeply interested in what you tell me. And I can see that you ought not to give up the boys, for God has endowed you with a special faculty for winning and helping them."

"Thank you for your kind words. Sometimes I have felt that it may be possible I am to devote

my entire time in the not distant future, to mission work. I am deeply interested in an enterprise under the auspices of the Young Men's Christian Association of our city, where a meeting is held, one evening in each week, down in the worst neighborhood of the slums. And God is blessing this work, for men are being reached and saved there, continually."

Never before had Keith opened his heart to Mabel as he was now doing. He added: "So you see many problems are confronting me. If I withdraw from the paper I lose my salary, my influence, and, to a considerable extent, my prestige. But the one thing I care to know is this: Where does my Elder Brother want me to be." "You will notice," he added, with a smile, "that I have adopted as my own, wee Lassie's title for her Lord. It clings to me and I like it."

"So do I," was Mabel's simple rejoinder.

This conversation, with the reading that had preceded it, brought Mabel and Keith into a closer feeling of comradeship than had ever before existed between them, and when he left Linwood the following day, his eyes lingered on her face with a tenderness that bespoke strong friendship and admiration for the winsome and glad-hearted maiden.

CHAPTER XXVI.

Danger.

DESPITE Mabel's assurance to Keith that her health was perfect, the coming of spring found her pale and languid to such a degree that Glenn became troubled.

The unusual confinement in the school-room, added to her tireless vigilance in striving to aid her brother in every possible way to reach and elevate the pupils under their care—for she was fully aware of her influence in the school—had taxed her strength more than she was aware.

"I am going to send you up among the mountains of Virginia, this summer, that you may win back your roses," Glenn said to her one evening late in May.

His sister opened her eyes wide in astonishment at this declaration.

"Alone?" she questioned, with a little frown marring her usually placid brow.

"A friend of mine, Victor Rodney, you know him, is going to Wytheville in June. He will be glad to look after your comfort while making the trip. The Tynes—they are couisns of ours, three removed—live just out of Tazewell. Their

home is an ideal one, and they have long wanted us to visit them. You can go on in June, and, if you are perfectly restored by September, I will run up for a few days, take a sniff of the mountain air, get better acquainted with our relatives, and bring you home with me. How does the plan suit you?" And Glenn looked smilingly into her face.

"How do you know that I will be welcomed by the Tynes? They have never met me."

"That will be all right. They are in the habit of taking a few guests from the city every summer to board, and I am sure they will be pleased to count a relative among the number. I will write to Cousin Anna this very day. I was charmed with the family and the home, as well as with the picturesque scenery and pure air when I was with them for a few days, some years ago, just after I returned from abroad. I fell in quite accidentally with Cousin Horace Tynes in New York, and he insisted that I must go home with him, which I did, greatly to my enjoyment."

Mabel, by degrees, began to accept this plan, not only as a wise precaution against the possibility of debility and invalidism getting their dreaded grasp upon her, but also as a pleasant way in which to spend the summer. Glenn ex-

"*The baby smiles his approval, and this renders him very popular.*"

(Page 275.)

pected to be absent from Linwood a great deal during the heated term, in the interests of the school, and this would leave her very lonely should she remain at home.

And, after the matter had once been presented to her, she found herself insensibly longing for the bracing air of a more northern latitude than Alabama offered.

Both Mr. and Mrs. Hildegarde were Virginians by birth, and Glenn and Mabel had always felt a strong affection for this noble State.

Thus, all things considered, it was with pleasing expectations of improvement in strength as well as an enjoyable summer, that the middle of June found her *en route* for her cousin's home. A letter had come in quick response to Glenn's missive of inquiry, extending a warm invitation for her to pay the contemplated visit, and promising her so many sources of diversion that Mabel had laughingly said to Glenn, as the letter was read:

"Dear me! I feel quite giddy and dissipated already, from merely hearing about the picnics and drives and afternoon teas awaiting me. I have had such a busy, quiet life for so long a time now, that I shall hardly know how to behave when I get among a lot of merry young

people, whose only thought is how best to have a good time."

Her brother smiled a little sadly because of her pale cheeks, as he replied: "It is the very thing you need. And the people Cousin Anna draws about her are not the giddy, light-headed sort. They believe in wholesome fun and innocent recreation, but their lives are set to noble music, as you will discover when you are among them. And I am the more glad that you are to be under our cousin's cheery influence, because I blame myself for your threatened break-down. Had I not been so absorbed in the affairs of the Republic I would have watched more carefully and not permitted you to over-tax yourself. And I ought to have made it my business to guard you more closely than I have done."

Of course Mabel hastened, very sincerely, to assure him that no one was in the least to blame but herself for her languid condition, but this did not relieve Glenn from his feeling of self-reproach.

Her brother's friend, Mr. Victor Rodney, proved to be a genial gentleman of middle age, who had recently married a very beautiful and charming lady to whom he had been engaged for over ten years, and who was now in Virginia.

Mabel listened with great interest and sympathy to his account of their long engagement, and the reasons for the delay of the marriage. And so lively was her appreciation of his present happiness in having at last secured the treasure he had so long coveted, and also of his desire to hasten to her side, that she remarked to him, with a mischievous smile, as their train was flying at its highest rate of speed, northward:

"I presume the cars seem to you to be moving at a snail's pace. I am sure I should feel thus were I in your place."

"That is true. How well you understand my feelings. Although, of course, I am grateful for the privilege of enjoying your society on this long trip, I am still impatient to reach Wytheville. And who can blame me?"

"Not I," and Mabel laughed, half amused and wholly sympathetic.

Mr. Rodney proved to be of so genial a nature that he soon made a number of acquaintances among the gentlemen on the train, and, as Mabel was often absorbed in a book with which she had provided herself, he spent much time in the "smoker," thus leaving her to her own reflections, a fact she greatly enjoyed.

For some reason, not at first explained to her, her escort had chosen, when they reached Knox-

ville, to leave the more popular route by the way of Bristol, and take a less travelled road by the way of Cumberland Gap, Norton and Cedar Bluff. This change, however, was of small moment to Mabel, for Mr. Rodney assured her the views were far more wild and picturesque on this road than on the other, and this was most acceptable news to her, as she was an ardent lover of mountain scenery, and the wilder it proved the more she enjoyed it.

And wild enough she found it as they passed from Cumberland Gap, eastward. To nerves less steady than hers, the high trestles over which they frequently rolled, and the sheer precipices often yawning on one side of the train, with a solid wall of nature's masonry on the other, proved rather trying. But to Mabel it was only pleasantly exhilirating. She was built of heroic material, although few tests had ever met her by which this could be ascertained.

From the moment of starting northward she had perceptibly improved in strength, her lassitude dropping away from her as a wearisome garment drops unheeded from a child's shoulders. Her appetite became so keen that she laughingly declared that she felt herself capable of "devouring two luncheons the size of this they have set before me."

This was at Cumberland Gap, where breakfast was brought to the train, the stop being too brief for the passengers to go out for a regular meal.

"We shall reach Tazewell by sunset," Mr. Rodney said to her, cheerfully, as they rolled along on their way, as swiftly as the curves and the heavy grades would permit.

He was in high spirits, for he knew when Mabel's destination was reached his own would speedily follow, and a mental vision of the cheery welcome awaiting him made him more genial than ever.

"At Norton I find we will have to wait an hour and ten minutes to make connection," he added, later. "But even with this break we will make the trip much quicker by coming this way than if we had gone the other."

"But how did you manage about my ticket?" Mabel questioned, suddenly recalling the fact that Glenn had said they were to pass through Bristol.

"I told your brother only to buy your ticket as far as Knoxville, for I was uncertain which route I would take until I reached there. The fare is about the same both ways, but this is the nearer route, and brings us to Tazewell several hours earlier than if we had gone by Bristol."

"I see," Mabel said, with a mischievous dimple in her cheek. "I did not understand until now why you chose this road. But to gain a few hours means much, when one is homesick to meet a dear friend."

"That is so. And I was sure you would not mind the change, although I find the accommodations on this road are rougher than I expected. This is my first trip over it. Is not the scenery magnificent?"

It certainly was, and Mabel feasted her eyes to her heart's content on the ever-varying panorama spread out before her. Wilder and still more rugged grew the outlook as they advanced, until she saw that Mr. Rodney was growing a trifle nervous as he glanced out from time to time, to note the extreme height of many of the trestles over which they passed.

But her nerves remained as steady as though she were at home in the drawing-room with Glenn, and the thought of possible danger only keyed her into a more exalted frame of mind, and turned her mental gaze more incessantly inward, where the Divine One ever kept watch, as she entrusted herself to his guardianship, that her peace should remain unbroken.

At Norton the hour for waiting lengthened into two. Passengers grew restless. Mr. Rod-

ney, with a frown on his brow, walked back and forth along the rude platform, evidently much disturbed by the unexpected delay.

When Mabel questioned him at last, he said: "There has been an accident in the tunnel, just ahead of us. A freight train was wrecked there this morning, and we are waiting for the track to be cleared. Probably we can move out in another half-hour.

But another full hour passed and still they did not proceed.

Dinner was at last obtained at a rude boarding-house near the depot, the passengers abandoning all hope of reaching, at least in time to satisfy their clamorous appetites, the usual point where meals were served.

The fare, though simple and plainly spread, was well cooked, and Mabel made a most enjoyable meal. While at the table she heard various comments from their fellow-passengers on the accident that caused the delay.

"I'm not going to venture through," one gentleman remarked. "I know something of the tunnels in this section, and I do not care to take any risk. I shall wait over, and take the cut through the Gap in the morning."

"I have got to reach Cedar Bluff to-night, so I shall push on as soon as the train is made up.

What is the special source of danger?" another inquired.

"Well, a heavy freight could hardly tumble over with such force as to break down two of the main supports, without rendering the tunnel unsafe. And there will not be sufficient time to replace the supports to-day."

"They have a large gang of men at work. I walked down to see about it," remarked a third.

The first speaker shook his head, saying: "The rock is easily loosened, all through this section, and many persons deem the tunnel unsafe at all times. Your train may get through all right. I hope it will. But I beg to be excused from making the trip."

Mabel raised her eyes with some anxiety to Mr. Rodney's face. They had both been silent listeners to the conversation.

"Do not feel nervous," he said, in a low voice. "Our conductor will not go through if there is danger." Then he added, in a louder tone, addressing the gentleman across the table who had first spoken: "Should the tunnel prove unsafe, could not the passengers walk around and meet the train at the other end?"

"Hardly, when on each side there is a solid wall reaching to a height I dare not mention lest you should doubt my word," was the reply.

"Do not feel apprehensive," Mr. Rodney said to Mabel, when, after five hours of weary waiting, the train at last whistled, and they took their seats in the car. "The conductor would take no needless risk. If he deems it safe to go through, we need feel no uneasiness."

But that he felt restless and oppressed, in spite of his words, was evident.

CHAPTER XXVII.

Some Breathless Moments.

THE train ran slowly out from the depot, as though feeling its way through impending dangers, and stopped several times before it reached the point about which every one's interest centered.

Once, just as it neared the tunnel's frowning arch, it halted, then retreated slowly along the rails until it almost reached the little station whence it had so recently emerged.

Mabel—who was alone in her seat, for Mr. Rodney, with the majority of the other male passengers, was somewhere in a forward coach seeking information, or rather on the lookout for it—decided that the conductor had felt the risk of making the passage through the injured tunnel too great to be incurred, and had thus gone back.

Doubtless they would have to spend the night at Norton.

But just as she reached this conclusion they again moved forward, and this time, as they neared the black opening where untold dangers might be lurking to engulf them, they did not

stop. But the engine slackened its speed as it passed into the shadow of the gloomy arch until it moved so slowly that Mabel several times thought it had really stopped. She glanced nervously about the car and noticed that every passenger wore a strained and anxious expression. The ladies among them—there were only four besides herself—looked, in the dim light thrown out by the lamps, quite pallid,—almost haggard.

A sudden, overpowering feeling of alarm; a sense of danger so imminent and awful began to take possession of her that, for a moment she felt a nervous inclination to weep, to shriek, to escape, she knew not where. One of the ladies behind her gave a little gasp of terror once or twice, but was speedily checked by her companion, an elderly woman, who said:

"You would better pray than weep, child. Only God can guard us now, for we are in great peril."

And then a seemingly breathless silence fell over the car, broken only at intervals by the labored sob of the engine, mingled, once and again, with a long blast from the whistle. The latter, however, held a muffled note that made it sound most wierd and unnatural, and only added

to the gruesome feeling that was clutching—like a hand of ice—around Mabel's heart-strings.

And then, while the tension was at its height, as she looked from the window she saw, close on either side, human forms. Each one was standing—straight and stiff—fitted into a narrow niche that seemed as if it might have been cut in the solid rock on purpose to receive its present occupant. Every man held a blazing torch above his head, and Mabel noted, with a fresh thrill of terror, that the heavy faces all bore the same expression of anxiety that marked the countenances on the train.

"If disaster should come to us through the falling in of the tunnel, it doubtless means death to every one of those brave fellows, and they know it," she thought, with a pitying glance toward them.

And then, slowly, hesitatingly, as she began fully to comprehend how unmistakably death seemed closing in about her; realized how the slightest jar from their creeping train might precipitate—in the twinkling of an eye—an avalanche of mighty boulders upon them, she absolutely, so far as she understood her own heart—and after a few moments spent in prayer—surrendered her grasp on life. Glenn, her home, the school, Keith, all her youthful

hopes and plans, were relinquished, and her soul breathed out from its deepest depths these words:

"If this is thy time, dear Elder Brother, to take me to thyself, I am willing to go. I am under the blood. I am thine. Thou art mine. Take me or spare me, as seemeth to thee good."

On the instant such a full, sweet flood of joy swept over her that, for a brief space of time she was dazed. It seemed to her that a luminous, divine ether filled her being until she almost felt that she was going to float up through the vaulted stone roof of the tunnel—up—up into the open arms of God.

And then, in another moment she became quiet and calm, and conscious that, in some mysterious way her Lord had revealed himself to her as she had never before known him.

This was inexplicable to her. She had no key with which to unlock the mystery, yet she knew that her heart now rested in his love and care with an abandonment of joy and trust she had never before experienced.

In the realization of this fact she—for a few moments—forgot her danger. Then she thought: "Probably we are to die, and this is God's way of preparing me for death. How good he is thus to take from me all dread and all fear."

But as the seconds passed, bringing with them no fresh development of danger, she began to realize that her life was not to end at this time, as she had supposed was to be the case. In quiet expectancy she waited.

When the train at last emerged from the tunnel, moving so slowly and softly that it almost seemed like a great shadow creeping along, Mabel's fellow-passengers evinced their relief from the awful danger through which they had passed, in various ways. Some laughed, others wept, and still others tried to talk in a careless tone, as though unaware of any special cause for rejoicing.

As the engine gathered power and began to move forward at its normal rate of speed, Mr. Rodney entered the car, coming from the smoker, where he had been seated during their passage through the tunnel.

"How great was the danger?" Mabel questioned, as he took a seat by her side.

"It is hard to tell. Very serious, though, I am sure. The conductor took a great risk in coming through."

At the first station where a halt was made a telegram brought the startling intelligence that just as the train glided out from its shadow the

tunnel had caved in, entombing every workman in its ruins.[1]

Mabel's heart sent up a cry of thanksgiving for the deliverance of the train, and also a pleading prayer that the men in the tunnel, if possible, might be spared.

Later news brought the gratifying assurance that the majority of them had escaped, their position in the niches close up against the solid wall, from which only a few had moved when the crash came, had been their salvation. They had realized the danger of a collapse from the unavoidable jar given the tunnel by the moving train, and had been slow to resume their work until the cars were out of the arch. And the crash came at the moment the train emerged into the open air, although those on board did not know of it until Cedar Bluff was reached, when the telegram from Norton announcing the disaster, met them.

Mabel received a warm welcome from her cousins at Tazewell, and many expressions of sympathy for the trying ordeal through which she had just passed, were poured upon her. She

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[1] This account of the tunnel disaster and Mabel's experience is true in almost every detail.

met the latter with the quiet assurance that she would not have missed the experience for a great deal, but did not explain her reasons.

Great was her surprise on the day following her arrival at her relatives' hospitable home, to see Kelso Keith coming up the front walk. He had been called to Virginia on business, and knowing the date of her intended visit, had so timed his movements as to meet her.

Great was her joy in seeing him, for her heart was longing to tell into some sympathetic ear her wonderful experience while in the tunnel.

Keith listened to her words with an attentive face, and the glow that shone from his eyes as he turned them upon her, at the close of her simple recital, proved that he understood and appreciated the spiritual enlargement which had come to her.

"You have received your anointing for service," he said in a low tone. "Hereafter, if you are true to him, the dear Elder Brother will use you as never before."

"I am conscious of his presence since that hour, as I never dreamed it possible I could know him while in the flesh. A veil seems to have been rent between my soul and God, and I am beginning to realize what a sweet and solemn thing it is to really belong to Christ," and

Mabel's face, as she spoke, was bathed with a light which proved that the inner temple of her soul was filled—as never before since Keith had known her—with the Spirit of God.

He lingered two days in Tazewell, and the Tynes' household seemed to understand that his visits to their guest were not those of an ordinary acquaintance, for, when he called Mabel was always left alone to entertain him.

When he at last took his departure a new circlet adorned her finger, seeing which, Mrs. Tynes—to whom Mabel had turned with instinctive affection—playfully touched—saying: "I do not remember to have seen this before. What a beautiful stone!"

"It is my engagement ring," Mabel responded, frankly. "I have promised to become Mr. Keith's wife as soon as my brother can fill my place in the school. This may not be for a long time, but Mr. Keith is willing to wait."

Could she have seen Glenn at that very moment she would have fancied her place might be more easily and speedily filled than she imagined. He was sitting with Agnes Hudson on the little piazza of the missionary's cottage on the bluffs above the convict camp, and something in his eyes and tone so betrayed the love that filled his heart for the lovely and noble

woman by his side, that, for the first time since they met, her eyes drooped in confusion under his glance.

Cupid can send his noiseless shafts into unwary victims, even under the shadow of so unsightly an excrescence on our social life as is a convict encampment, and before the summer waned the missionary's daughter became aware that one of those glittering arrows was securely buried in the depths of her own heart, and that only the presence of Glenn Hildegarde had power to assuage the sweet and mysterious pain the wound caused her.

"But who will take my place with the poor convict boys?" she questioned, as August merged into September, and the engagement between them had been announced to her parents, greatly to the satisfaction of the latter.

"Cousin Kate will be only too glad to do so," Mrs. Hudson replied. "We can place a reliable woman in charge of the housekeeping and leave Kate free to fill your place in the work. She is well-fitted for the position, for before she came to us she was matron in a large orphan asylum in Nashville."

Thus it transpired that only a few weeks following Mabel's engagement, Glenn wrote her of his own, and Keith soon learned that he need

not wait so long before he claimed his bride as he had at first thought must be the case.

The missive announcing Glenn's happiness reached her just as she was starting on one of her numerous drives with her cousin.

It was a pleasure to share the secret with this sympathetic friend, and together they smiled over the letter, Mrs. Tynes, who was only a few years her senior, seeming to be almost as excited and as joyous over the news as was Mabel.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

A Parting Glance.

THREE years have elapsed since our last chapter was written. During the last twenty-eight months of this period Mabel Hildegarde has written her name Mabel Keith, and life to her has become a more sweet and solemn gift than ever before.

She has thrown herself into her husband's mission work among the news-boys and boot-blacks he has gathered into his hall, with all the ardor of her enthusiastic nature, and as this ardor has passed through the refining fire of the Holy Spirit; and has also received the imprint of power that comes alone from him, the result of her labors has been most gratifying to those interested in the fruit gathered from this neglected portion of the Master's vineyard.

Her experience gained among the citizens of Linwood Republic has been of inestimable value to her in her labors with the street gamins of Chicago, and many a city urchin has received, through her, just the help and sympathy needed to arouse his dormant manliness into active life, because of those two years previously spent

among the neglected boys of her loved Southland.

One of the sweetest incidents connected with her life in the mission came to her a few weeks after her marriage. She was early in the hall, one evening, practicing a piece of music she wished to sing with the boys. Her husband had not yet joined her. The editorial rooms were above the mission hall, and he was sometimes detained until the last moment by pressure of office work.

A young man entered the hall, and seeing Mabel at the organ at once came to her. His bearing marked him as belonging to the cultured class of society, and Mabel wondered what had brought him to the mission.

She was not left long in doubt. He inquired for Mr. Keith, and while she was explaining that her husband would soon be in, the stranger fixed his eyes on the silver pin on the bosom of her gown. With a smile he raised his hand, and calling her attention to a similar one adorning the lapel of his coat, he said:

"My name is Dupont. Mr. Keith helped me out of the mire of sin a few years back by introducing me to his Captain. And through him I was led to wear this pin as an outward sign that my heart was given to Christ and

that I was endeavoring to serve him. I had previously worn a badge that proclaimed me a follower of Satan. I am passing through the city, and have called to see Mr. Keith to thank him for the interest shown me when I was a stranger to him, and also a stranger to God."

At this moment Keith himself entered the room, and it is needless to say that a precious half-hour of fellowship ensued.

Young Dupont, it seemed, was a regular worker in the interests of the Young Men's Christian Association movement, and was now on his way West on a mission connected with the advancement of this cause. He remained with Keith and Mabel until the close of the night's service, and rendered efficient help by telling the boys, in an interesting and effective manner, of some of his bitter experiences while he was the slave of sin and of Satan, and the joy that had come to him since he had changed masters.

"The pin has been no end of help to me," he said to Keith, just before he left. "Often when under temptation, especially in the earlier months of my experience, I am sure I should have yielded had not the badge caught my attention at just the right moment and breathed to me: 'I am his.' May God bless every man

who devises means for helping young people who want to do right. And may he bless you for scattering the Christian Endeavor pledges and pins where help is so sorely needed."

This brief visit was a most pleasing episode in Keith's busy life, and that night as he and Mabel knelt together beside their family altar, he thanked God from a full heart for permitting him to have been the means, in his hands, of turning Wallace Dupont from a life of sin into a life of service for Christ.

When Agnes Hudson became Glenn Hildegarde's wife, which event occurred just one month previous to Mabel's marriage to Keith, she brought to him not only a heart filled with wifely love and devotion, but also a nature and an experience that fitted her in an especial manner for being a helpmeet to him in the work to which he had dedicated his life.

Even Citizen Welldon, who, at first, felt that the Republic could never again be the success it had proven while Mabel was with them, soon acknowledged that: "Mrs. Hildegarde understood how to help a fellow 'most as well as Miss Mabel."

This was the highest praise his loyalty to Mabel would permit him to voice, but he soon became a staunch friend to Agnes, and, under

her fostering care, he now begins to cherish the ambition of becoming, at some future day, an officer and teacher in the Republic.

Nearly all the features of the Freeville institution have now been incorporated into the Linwood commonwealth, with some modifications which the Principal feels are an improvement.

For the past year the real government has been almost wholly entrusted to the "citizens," Glenn feeling that they had become sufficiently developed and trained to assume this responsibility, under his own general oversight, assisted by the teachers. The latter are called "Governors," and stand shoulder to shoulder with the Principal in all his plans for the improvement of the institution.

A large store has been added during the past two years, where all the supplies, clothing included, which the citizens need, can be obtained. One of the mottos of the Republic has been from the beginning the Scriptural one:

"That if any would not work, neither should he eat," and this is rigidly enforced. A citizen enjoys more or less of the accommodations about him, including a more handsomely furnished sleeping apartment as compared with a smaller and less comfortable one; also finer or coarser clothing, in proportion to his labors.

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All work is graded according to its quality and the amount performed, and the citizen who is industrious, painstaking and careful, is rewarded for his industry, care, and skill, by receiving wages in proportion.

This proves a potent factor in promoting diligence and faithfulness in all the branches of labor taught. And there are some ten or twelve of the citizens who are turning off really remarkable work, considering their years, and the time they have been in the Republic. Among these are Citizens Welldon, Allen and Ridley, with four boys from Selma, Alabama, and two from Arkansas, while Birmingham boasts of three.

These twelve boys are the leading citizens, and the weight of their united influence gives a tone to the school which carries everything before it.

A shiftless, unfaithful boy soon feels so uncomfortable in the atmosphere in which he finds himself, that he is speedily forced to amend his ways. Or, being looked upon with unconcealed scorn by his companions, and only able to pay for the meanest comforts offered by the Republic, he at last becomes sullen and discontented, and withdraws. As there have been but two such cases since the inception of the school, it will be seen that faithfulness and industry

have been characteristic of those seeking its opportunities and advantages.

But to say that the past four years, which have been preëminently experimental ones, have been free from drawbacks and disappointments, would be going too far. Or to indicate that Glenn Hildegarde has been able to bring his little commonwealth up to his ideal, would also be a mistake.

But in spite of the trials and difficulties that have met him he feels assured that the enterprise is a success, and he is therefore not only satisfied, but greatly encouraged.

On this particular morning of which we now write, being the opening day of the fifth year of the "Linwood Miniature Republic," there is much pleasant excitement among the citizens. The election of officers for the ensuing term of one year is the order of the day. Much canvassing and electioneering for favorite candidates, all in good humor, has been going on. Nearly all of the original citizens, with which the Republic was inaugurated, are still present, and it is from among these that most of the candidates are drawn.

A fine-looking youth of some nineteen years, whom one has to study intently before one recognizes, in his straight, active figure and open

countenance, the slouching-shouldered, sullen-faced boy whom the reader first met on the mountain side in the act of committing theft, and who was then known as "Crates," but is now designated as "Citizen Welldon," steps up to Principal Hildegarde with the question: "Who shall be the judges of the election?"

Glenn quickly gives him the names of three citizens, whom he deems well fitted to fill this office, and the election proceeds.

After the ballots are all in, and while the eager but quiet voters are waiting expectantly for the announcement of the result, Agnes with their eleven-months'-old boy—Hudson Hildegarde—joins her husband. Her interest in the day's proceedings is equal to his, and the citizens welcome her in their midst by various little acts of courtesy, thus showing their pleasure in her presence among them.

The babe, who is a laughing, rollicking little fellow, smiles his approval on all that is going on, and this fact renders him very popular.

In due time it is announced that Citizen Socrates Welldon has been elected president; Citizen James Allen, vice-president; Citizen Jacob Ridley, supreme judge, and Citizen John Sykes and Abram Brown, associate justices. In this miniature Republic all these offices are filled

by the votes of the citizens, rather than a portion of them, as in our larger Republic, by appointments made by the president.

On motion of the Principal the election is made unanimous, and then the enthusiasm of the youthful citizens breaks through all restraint. Cheers are given for each officer elected, the president, who is very popular, receiving three cheers and a tiger.

And then, at a word from this high official, all the citizens gather in a mass in front of the Principal, who wonders what is coming. He is soon enlightened.

The school has long been talking of getting up a "college yell," but so far as the Principal knows, this has never been done. His ears are now made aware, however, that the "yell" is an accomplished fact by hearing one hundred and ten enthusiastic voices, in well-trained style get off the following:

"Hear ye this—citizens all,
Who do not care to get a fall:
Up with the right,
Down with the wrong!
Where right is might,
The soul grows strong.
And who are we? Why, we are men
Under the lead of Principal Glenn.
We send each traitorous scamp afar
Who is not true to the L. M. R."

And then, gathering fresh volume of sound, the citizens, in a wilder burst of enthusiasm than before—led by the president—roll out their crowning effort:

"Hurrah! hurrah! for Hildegarde;
He is our friend, our chum, our pard.
Rah!—rah!—rah!—rah!—rah!—rah!"

On the night following this full and interesting day, as Glenn seeks his couch, his heart whispers: "Thank God for wee Lassie. It was her words that 'poor Crates needs help to be good' that first turned my mind toward this work. And so I can truthfully say that the Linwood Miniature Republic owes its origin to wee Lassie."

The further history of this unique institution in gathering in the neglected, the poor, the illiterate and the depraved boys of Alabama—and neighboring States—and under God developing them into worthy men and citizens, and sending them out to bless the State and the world, some future historian must chronicle.

Here the writer lays down her pen, thanking the indulgent reader for having followed her simple story to its close.

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